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From: Secretary-General of the European Commission, signed by Ms Martine
DEPREZ, Director

To: Ms Thérèse BLANCHET, Secretary-General of the Council of the
European Union

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Delegations will find attached document COM(2026) 540 final.

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2026/0105 (NLE)

Proposal for a
COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION
on fighting housing exclusion

{SWD(2026) 770 final}

1. CONTEXT OF THE PROPOSAL

• Reasons for and objectives of the proposal

In her State of the Union address on 10 September 2025, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen placed housing and poverty centre stage, committing to a “**plan to help eradicate poverty by 2050**” with an ambitious **European Anti-Poverty Strategy** and to present the first ever **European Affordable Housing Plan**. The President underscored that [‘the European Pillar of Social Rights established housing as a right in Europe’](#), declaring that it was time to realise that promise into reality. She characterised the housing crisis as a social challenge and a matter of dignity, advocating for a radical overhaul of the way we tackle this issue.

Principle 19 of the European Pillar of Social Rights enshrines the right to housing and assistance to the homeless. It calls for access to social housing or housing assistance of good quality to be provided for those in need; and underlines that vulnerable people have the right to appropriate assistance and protection against forced eviction. The principle also underscores that adequate shelter and services shall be provided to the homeless in order to promote their social inclusion.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union underlines that, to combat social exclusion and poverty, the Union recognises and respects the right to social and housing assistance. The goal is to ensure a decent existence for all those who lack sufficient resources, in accordance with the rules laid down by Union and national laws and practices.

The revised **European Social Charter** recognises the right for everybody to access housing of an adequate standard and to prevent and reduce homelessness with a view to its gradual elimination.

Considering the importance of these rights and the need to effectively implement them, **the Lisbon Declaration on the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness**, signed in June 2021 by Member States, EU Institutions and Advisory bodies, social partners and relevant NGOs, expresses the commitment to work towards the ending of homelessness by 2030, so that (i) no one sleeps rough for lack of accessible, safe and appropriate emergency accommodation; (ii) no one lives in emergency or transitional accommodation longer than is required for successful move-on to a permanent housing solution; (iii) no one is discharged from any institution (e.g. prison, hospital, care facility) without an offer of appropriate housing; (iv) evictions should be prevented whenever possible and no one is evicted without assistance for an appropriate housing solution, when needed; (v) no one is discriminated against due to their homelessness status.

The **overall goals of this proposal** are to promote policy efforts to effectively implement the aforementioned orientations on access to housing and housing assistance.

The **European Affordable Housing Plan**, the first EU-level framework aiming to address the housing crisis, is built on four pillars where action is needed, including supporting those affected by housing exclusion and homelessness. It proposes a Council recommendation to support vulnerable persons in precarious housing situations and to prevent and address homelessness, through person-centred, housing-led and integrated policies.

The EU’s first-ever Anti-Poverty Strategy announced in the political guidelines 2024-2029, **aims to help eradicate poverty by 2050** and focuses on providing support to Member States to “help people to get access to the essential protection and services they need, along with

addressing the root causes of poverty”. This proposal for a Council Recommendation is adopted together with the EU **Anti-Poverty Strategy** and is integral part of the Commission’s efforts to prevent and combat poverty. Also, part of the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy, the Strengthened European Child Guarantee addresses gaps in combating child poverty, ensuring children in need can access essential services - including adequate housing - to support their development.

With the aim of **preventing and combating housing exclusion and homelessness**, this proposal for a Council Recommendation will serve as a tool to **support Member States, regions and cities** in reviewing, designing and implementing comprehensive, person-centred, housing-led and integrated strategic policy frameworks to prevent and reduce housing exclusion and homelessness, in both urban and rural areas. Rural and remote areas face specific challenges regarding access to affordable housing, including low property values, which can reduce incentives for maintenance and investment and lead to vacancy, degradation, and abandonment of housing stock. In addition, rural housing is often older and more energy inefficient, increasing renovation needs, costs for residents, and contributing to energy poverty. While some Member States have recently developed or strengthened their strategic policy frameworks, substantial variations in methodologies, governance structures and results exist, underscoring the need for guidance on proven, evidence-based policy action. The policy aim is to support vulnerable persons in, or at risk of, precarious housing situations and to prevent and address homelessness.

Housing exclusion refers to the inability of an individual or household to access or maintain decent, stable housing that meets basic quality standards, legal security¹, and affordability. Homelessness is its most visible and extreme form and includes people sleeping rough and in emergency and temporary accommodation. However, housing exclusion is broader, and includes those who have a roof over their heads but live in conditions that are inadequate and/or insecure. Insecure housing occurs when individuals encounter threats of arbitrary or forced eviction, domestic abuse, or hold unstable tenancy agreements. Inadequate housing occurs when individuals occupy dwellings of sub-standard quality that lack basic facilities, whether due to severe disrepair, extreme overcrowded or not adapted to people with additional needs, such as older people or persons with disabilities or long-term care needs. Other form of housing exclusion can include the unavailability of accommodation for students, which can lead to giving up further studies.

Homelessness is the most severe manifestation of poverty and social marginalisation, significantly diminishing life expectancy, health, well-being and societal, democratic and labour market participation, and the ability to access essential economic and social services. It is a complex, evolving social challenge driven by structural factors - such as poverty, unemployment, living in marginalised areas, limited availability of social and affordable housing and inadequate social welfare provision. Personal circumstances, like addiction, poor mental or physical health, family breakdown, or domestic violence, can heighten vulnerability or act as triggers. While rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness (**rooflessness**), less obvious forms - particularly **houselessness** - also exist, where individuals live in emergency or temporary accommodation.²

¹ Quality standards housing set out the minimum requirements for a dwelling to be considered habitable, safe, and legally compliant. These standards, often enforced through local housing codes require that homes provide structural stability, sanitation, and fire safety. Legal security refers to security of tenure.

² These categories are part of ‘ETHOS’, the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion. ETHOS was developed as a framework to improve understanding and measurement of homelessness in Europe and to provide a common ‘language’ for transnational exchanges on homelessness. The ETHOS classification includes all living situations that amount to forms of homelessness and housing exclusion.

Differences in legal and statistical definitions of homelessness, along with disparate types of monitoring and methodologies among Member States pose challenges to producing consistent, reliable, and comparable data on homelessness across the EU. National available data indicate an upward trend in several Member States, with the OECD estimating that **approximately one million people are experiencing homelessness in the EU**. The socio-demographic characteristics of individuals who experience housing exclusion or homelessness differ based on national, regional and local contexts. Nonetheless, the **OECD³** shows that certain populations are disproportionately affected by homelessness, including **young people, families with children, migrants, older adults and persons with disabilities**.

According to the **2023 EU-SILC⁴ module ‘Intergenerational transmission of advantages and disadvantages and housing difficulties’⁵**, approximately 5% of adults in the EU report experiencing housing difficulties at some stage in their lives, including rough sleeping, residing in emergency shelters, living in non-traditional housing or temporarily staying with family and friends due to a lack of alternatives. The share of all households at risk of poverty or social exclusion that experience housing difficulties is more than double the share of those not at risk (8.5% compared with 3.9%). Households with dependent children (18.1%) are more likely to experience difficulties renting accommodation than those without (10.2%). The primary causes of housing difficulties are family and personal issues (30%), financial issues (25.9%), job loss or inability to find a job (7.3%), the end of a rental contract (5.2%) and relationship or family issues (14.1%). Health problems contribute to housing difficulties in 1.1% of cases. 26.5% overcame housing difficulties by finding a job, 20.4% by moving into social or subsidised private housing accounted, and 14.1% through relationships or family.

Homelessness is also a **significant systemic challenge with considerable fiscal and social implications** for Member States. Practices that favour reactive, crisis-focused action, such as emergency healthcare, temporary shelters, and criminal justice oversight, result in a cycle of high-cost services that do not address the underlying causes of homelessness. Beyond the immediate impact on state budgets, there are broader societal costs, including the erosion of human potential and the weakening of community cohesion, as housing exclusion hinders economic engagement and perpetuates cycles of intergenerational inequalities.

A strategic shift is therefore required to tackle housing exclusion and homelessness, from emergency management to person-centred, housing-led and integrated policies. **Person-centred policies** focus on meeting the distinct challenges of individuals and households in precarious housing situations who face or are at risk of housing exclusion and homelessness. **Housing-led approaches**, such as Housing First, help people in precarious housing situations to remain in their accommodation and aim at providing stable housing as rapidly as possible, coupled with **integrated support services**, to those experiencing housing exclusion and more specifically homelessness. Evidence shows that these are the most efficient and cost-effective policies to address homelessness.

Housing-led approaches can be hampered by the lack of affordable housing. Although increasing the supply of affordable housing is a medium and long-term aim, improvements in the short-term could be achieved by more targeted allocation of social and public housing and by supporting people experiencing homelessness to access existing and vacant homes in the rental market with house-search assistance, rental guarantees or subsidies and financial

³ [OECD Affordable Housing Database | OECD](#)

⁴ EU-SILC stands for the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions. It is a harmonised annual survey (since 2003) conducted across EU member states and some non-EU countries to collect comparative, multi-dimensional, longitudinal, and cross-sectional microdata regarding income, poverty, social exclusion, and housing conditions

⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/SEPDF/cache/132338.pdf>

support to pay for rental deposits, while also ensuring appropriate safeguards and incentives for homeowners/landlords. Increasing the supply of affordable housing is a challenge requiring the involvement of multiple stakeholders at each stage of the process, starting with the design of specific housing policy measures to boost the supply of social and affordable housing in a manner that also encourages private investment. Housing provision must be integrated with social support, housing assistance, healthcare and long-term care services, labour market integration services, and other essential services to tackle the multifaceted challenges associated with housing exclusion and homelessness

Quality is crucial for housing sustainability, and an individual's dignity and well-being. Minimum standards for decent housing include safety conditions to protect occupants from hazards such as structural collapse, fire, inadequate sanitation, and environmental threats, as well as accessibility adaptations where relevant. Housing safety requires adequate essential services (e.g., electricity, heating, and running water) and protection from weather, structural issues, and other dangers. Quality housing also involves good energy performance, to prevent households from experiencing energy poverty, and sufficient living space per person to prevent overcrowding.

Strategic frameworks to tackle homelessness currently exist in 19 Member States, either at national or subnational level. These strategies prioritise and focus on the provision of social and affordable housing and comprehensive support for people experiencing homelessness. Homelessness prevention and the shift from emergency and temporary accommodation to long-term housing solutions, including the development or expansion of approaches such as Housing First, that are at the core of policy in several countries.

Effective strategies to tackle housing exclusion and homelessness must prioritise prevention, resources for which are often inadequate. Despite preventive approaches being more economical than reactive approaches, they are frequently overshadowed by quick, emergency responses. Early intervention services, including mediation for rent arrears, rent or mortgage debt counselling, legal support concerning tenants and landlord rights, early-warning systems and short-term financial aid, are provided inconsistently and can be difficult to access. Improving these services, tailored support to individuals leaving institutions and adequate financial help to increase take-up of benefits, is crucial for disrupting the cycle that leads to homelessness

Preventive measures can also address arbitrary or forced **evictions**. While it is challenging to get comprehensive, reliable and comparable data on evictions, for example on the number of eviction notices, procedures or orders, and whether the data covers all evictions or only those conducted by law enforcement agents, the OECD estimates that at least 2.4 million formal eviction procedures are initiated annually across OECD countries.

Mitigation measures and cooperation mechanisms should be developed to reduce eviction and homelessness risks. The European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter require that countries ensure legal protection for those facing eviction. This includes consulting affected parties to find alternative solutions, setting payment plans to ensure rents and mortgages can be paid, proposing a reasonable eviction notice period, banning night or winter evictions where possible, providing legal remedies against illegal evictions and aid, and offering compensation for illegal evictions. When evictions occur, they must respect the dignity and rights of individuals and should be accompanied by alternative accommodation.

An effective housing exclusion and homelessness strategy should therefore integrate expanding social and affordable housing supply for stable medium and long-term solutions and include prevention and rehousing by protecting those in precarious housing situations from eviction, intervening early on rent arrears, including through financial and debt

counselling as well as ensuring access to adequate social, employment, health and care services.

- **Consistency with existing policy provisions in the policy area**

The proposal contributes to implementing **principle 19 of the European Pillar of Social Rights on housing and assistance for the homeless**. This principle recognises that people in need should have access to social housing or high-quality housing assistance; that vulnerable people have the right to protection against forced eviction and that homeless people must be provided with adequate accommodation and services.

The Presidency conclusions on the future European Affordable Housing Plan of 1 December 2025, call for a stronger cooperation at EU level building on the work of and further strengthening the European Platform on Combating Homelessness and housing-led policies such as the Housing First Principle. They also invite the Commission to consider whether a Council Recommendation can contribute to this end. In December 2025, the European Commission launched the **European Affordable Housing Plan**, the first EU-level framework aiming to address the housing crisis. The plan comprises four pillars: (i) increasing housing supply; (ii) mobilising investment; (iii) providing immediate support and driving reforms; and (iv) safeguarding those most affected by housing exclusion. Action 10 of the plan, that focuses on addressing homelessness and supporting tenants and households in vulnerable situations, proposes a Council recommendation on fighting housing exclusion to support vulnerable persons in precarious housing situations and to prevent and address homelessness.

The Lisbon Declaration on the European Platform on Combating Homelessness launched the **European Platform on Combating Homelessness** (the Platform) which promotes (i) comparable, reliable data, and monitoring; (ii) knowledge exchange; and (iii) improving access to funding, together with (iv) mainstreaming housing exclusion and homelessness in all relevant Union policies. This proposal builds on the work carried out so far and lessons learned through the Platform.

The Commission has significantly stepped up its contribution in housing-related policies while fully respecting Member States competence in the field. While most competences in housing lie with national, regional and local authorities, the situation has evolved from a local real estate issue into a systemic **housing crisis**. The EU's 2023 **Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion** identifies access to housing as one of the enabling services that can help individuals without sufficient resources to integrate into society and, where relevant, into the labour market, and to access other enabling services and income support.

- **Consistency with other Union policies**

The **European Child Guarantee** adopted in 2021 aims to prevent and combat social exclusion by recommending that Member States guarantee that children in need have effective access to a set of key services, including adequate housing. It recommends that Member States consider the specific disadvantages experienced by homeless children or children facing severe housing deprivation and ensure that they, along with their families, have access to 'adequate accommodation' and to relevant social and advisory services.

The Council Recommendation on access to affordable high-quality long-term care calls on Member States to expand formal long-term care services, especially home and community-based care. Housing that is adapted to individuals' evolving care needs is a fundamental prerequisite for ageing in place, enabling the provision of home-based care.

The 2021 **Social Economy Action Plan** and the related 2023 **Council Recommendation on developing social economy framework conditions** aim to improve the framework conditions for social economy organisations across Europe. Many social economy organisations work to promote the social inclusion of marginalised and disadvantaged people, including through work integration and providing affordable and inclusive housing and other relevant social services (such as legal and practical support for tenants).

The **Intergenerational Fairness Strategy** states that access to affordable and sustainable housing, quality public services, including social and care services, transport, digital connectivity, social infrastructure and recreation facilities are central to whether people can remain in, return to, or build a future in their communities.

The 2023 **Commission Communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health** identifies people experiencing homelessness as a vulnerable group requiring targeted support. The Communication also acknowledges that housing exclusion reinforces mental ill-health and disability.

The **Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027** provides a comprehensive framework to support both migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background. Grounded in the principle of ‘Inclusion for All,’ it outlines measures to strengthen action and bring together actors at all levels to advance integration and inclusion, fostering cohesive societies across four areas: education, employment, health, and housing.

The **Long-term Vision for the EU’s rural areas (LTVRA)**⁶ sets out a holistic framework for stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas to 2040. Addressing access to basic services is one of the objectives of the LTVRA, including rural housing. The updated Rural Action Plan, to be published in 2026, aims to include one action on addressing rural housing.

The **EU Anti-Racism Strategy 2026–2030**, adopted in January 2026 acknowledges that people from racial and ethnic minorities face discrimination and barriers in housing. Racialised communities, including Roma, face unequal conditions in access to housing and disproportionate risks of overcrowding, poor living conditions, homelessness and segregation.

The **Gender Equality Strategy 2026-2030** was adopted in March 2026, and announced, in line with the European Affordable Housing Plan, the Commission’s intention to address housing exclusion by proposing a Council recommendation.

The **Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030** adopted in 2021 aims to help Member States enable independent living and deinstitutionalisation by ensuring that persons with disabilities can live accessible, supported housing. It promotes community inclusion over segregated institutions, reducing homelessness risks for those transitioning without proper support.

The **LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy 2026-2030** adopted in October 2025 emphasises that discrimination and a lack of social acceptance result in high poverty and homelessness rates among LGBTIQ+ individuals. The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights third LGBTIQ survey reveals that 38% of LGBTIQ+ respondents struggle to make ends meet, compared with 22% of the general population, and 13% resort to temporary stays with friends or relatives.

⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0345>

The Council Directive implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin of June 2000, implements the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, also through the prohibition of discrimination in relation to access to housing.

The **Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council ‘A Union of Equality: EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation’** adopted in October 2020, underlines persistent challenges for Roma when it comes to housing, including inadequate and segregated housing. It seeks to ensure equal access to adequate, desegregated housing and essential services by 2030 and calls on Member States to adopt national strategies for the socio-economic inclusion of marginalised Roma - focusing on education, employment, health, and housing. The 2021 **Council Recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation** calls Member States to ensure equal treatment of Roma people in access to, inter alia, adequate desegregated housing and essential services.

The EU provides various funding mechanisms that can be used to address housing exclusion and homelessness. In 2024, the European Commission launched **Social housing and beyond – Operational toolkit on the use of EU funds for investments in social housing and associated services**. This toolkit supports policymakers in maximising the use of EU funds - the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) - for social housing investments and related services. Through 20 case studies, it showcases how these funds improve access to adequate housing, offering tailored solutions for vulnerable groups.

Cohesion policy, primarily through the **ESF+** and the **ERDF**, funds initiatives that aim to improve social inclusion and housing conditions such as social services to homeless people, the construction and renovation of affordable housing, and the conversion of unused buildings into affordable and social housing. The **ESF+** can fund the provision of services such as social work, healthcare, and job coaching, while the **ERDF** can fund, new social housing, renovations, and the infrastructure for “Housing First” service hubs. The mid-term review (Regulation (EU) 2025/1914) expanded funding options for affordable and social housing and introduced higher EU co-financing rates. Member States can draw on instruments such as Integrated Territorial Investments and Community-Led Local Development to combine funding from multiple policy objectives.

The European Urban Initiative provides direct funding to cities for ‘bold, unproven ideas’ to tackle urban challenges, as well as innovative ways to housing solutions including for homeless people.

The **RRF** has been used by Member States to invest in social infrastructure, including housing. Some Member States addressed homelessness in their recovery and resilience plans (RRPs), proposing housing-led solutions. Others planned investments in housing more broadly (e.g. energy renovation of housing, affordable housing projects). A portion of funds labelled ‘social spending’ in RRP goes to social housing and related social infrastructure. National plans often include training, healthcare, services for vulnerable people and housing-related measures that can reduce the risk of homelessness.

The Social Climate Fund provides support to vulnerable households by addressing the social impact arising from the Emissions Trading System. In their Social Climate Plans, Member

States can include measures and investments with lasting impact to support the access to affordable, energy efficient housing, including social housing.

The **Social Investment and Skills Window of InvestEU** aids in providing access to social and affordable housing, helps combat social exclusion, and works towards alleviating poverty. It successfully de-risks affordable social housing and can help housing exclusion by channelling advisory support and supporting the roll-out of financial instruments. This includes guarantees to projects by implementing partners such as the European Investment Bank, the Council of Europe Development Bank and national promotional banks.

The **New European Bauhaus** (NEB) was launched in 2021 by the European Commission as a connective initiative at the intersection of sustainability, aesthetics and social inclusion. The goal is to transform the built environment and people's lives to make them more sustainable, inclusive, beautiful and people centred. The NEB works by engaging people at grassroots level in their neighbourhoods, providing tools and guidance, offering tailor-made solutions for different communities, and incorporating the views of various stakeholders into the design and implementation processes. The NEB prioritises people and social inclusion, as well as the economy in order to boost the Union's competitiveness and strategic autonomy.

The **NEB Facility** finances projects that aim to revitalise neighbourhoods, boost social inclusion and enable access to affordable housing through innovative, circular and human-centred design – linking housing supply with broader social and environmental goals. The Research and Innovation component of the NEB Facility supports several projects on housing and homelessness, including social infrastructure and services.

The **Affordable Housing Initiative**, part of the EU's **Renovation Wave Strategy** and a **flagship of the New European Bauhaus**, aims to create or renew social and affordable neighbourhoods. The programme addresses energy poverty, promotes inclusion, ensures affordability, and reduces emissions through tailored guidance, including financial advice, mentorship, and capacity-building. This can help improve housing quality and accessibility for lower-income households.

Supporting people and their social inclusion, including by fighting poverty and homelessness, are among the objectives of the **Commission proposal for the next EU long-term budget for 2028-2034** (known as the multiannual financial framework or MFF). With its new integrated approach, the MFF proposal will allow Member States to fund affordable and social housing and combating homelessness to be combined with necessary reforms.

2. LEGAL BASIS, SUBSIDIARITY AND PROPORTIONALITY

• Legal basis

The proposed recommendation is based on Article 292 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) as the procedural legal basis in combination with Article 153(1)(j) TFEU as the substantial legal basis.

Article 153(1)(j) allows the Union to support and complement the activities of Member States in the combating of social exclusion. Housing exclusion and homelessness are recognised as the most severe forms of social exclusion in the EU. The proposal will contribute to this objective by combating housing exclusion and homelessness while ensuring effective access to enabling and essential services and measures, thereby allowing individuals to live with dignity.

Article 153(1)(j) is limited by Article 153(2)(a), which only allows measures designed to encourage cooperation between Member States, while excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations.

Furthermore, under Article 153(4), the provisions adopted pursuant to Article 153, such as the proposed recommendation: (i) must not affect the right of Member States to define fundamental principles of their social protection systems; and (ii) must not significantly affect the financial equilibrium of those systems.

- **Subsidiarity (for non-exclusive competence)**

While responsibility for housing policy lies primarily with Member States, housing exclusion and homelessness are common challenges across the Union, driven by common structural trends that benefit from coordinated, cross-sectoral responses and from the sharing of best practices. They are closely linked to Union objectives in the fields of social inclusion, employment, health, equality economic development and territorial cohesion.

The growing gap between housing cost and income undermines educational and labour mobility, limiting access to high-productivity areas, and forcing labour shortages in essential, low-paid service sectors. When housing cost outpaces wages, workers are forced to cut spending, increase commuting times, or relocate, all of which reduce overall economic efficiency and productivity. Unequal access to adequate housing deepens existing inequalities of opportunity and fuels social exclusion.

Member States are best placed to design and implement policies suited to their national circumstances. However, Union-level action adds value by providing policy guidance, best practices, facilitating mutual learning, promoting evidence-based approaches, supporting data comparability, and improving access to finance. Such action upholds the Union's political commitment to ensure equal opportunities and a life of dignity for all and supports the upward social convergence of Member States.

Ending housing exclusion and homelessness would contribute to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly SDG 11.1 on access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services. It would also promote implementation of the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the objectives of the Lisbon Declaration on the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness. The policies and measures set out in the proposed recommendation will also complement and support effective implementation of the European Affordable Housing Plan, with a focus on protecting those most affected by the housing crisis. The proposed Council Recommendation would provide Member States with a comprehensive reference framework to guide them in achieving the objectives mentioned above.

- **Proportionality**

The measures proposed in this recommendation are proportional to the objectives pursued. The recommendation does not impose binding obligations or harmonise national legislation. It provides flexible guidance, identifies effective practices and encourages gradual alignment with agreed principles. It therefore does not go beyond what is necessary to achieve its objectives and is proportionate to the challenges addressed.

The proposal supports further developing of housing policy for those in a precarious housing situation, access to care and other existing services and social safety nets in Member States and complements Member States' efforts in combating the social exclusion of disadvantaged

individuals. The proposed recommendation respects Member States' practices and the diversity of their social protection systems. It recognises that different national, regional or local situations could result in differences in the way in which the recommendation is implemented and allows Member States to make use of the recommendation according to their specific context. Proportionality also played a key role in guiding the choice of the instrument.

- **Choice of the instrument**

The instrument is a proposal for a Council recommendation, which abides by the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. It builds on the existing body of the Union law and is in line with the type of instruments available for Union action in the area of social policy. As a legal instrument, the proposal signals Member States' commitment to the measures laid down in it and provides a strong political basis for cooperation at Union level in this area, while fully respecting the remit of the Member States.

3. RESULTS OF EX POST EVALUATIONS, STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS AND IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

- **Ex-post evaluations/fitness checks of existing legislation**

n/a

- **Stakeholder consultations**

A public consultation is not required for this type of initiative.

A call for evidence has been published for feedback between 12 March 2026 and 9 April 2026. Feedback revealed as cross-cutting concern the shortage of affordable and social housing, with contributors urging sustained public investment, expansion of non-profit and cooperative housing, and stronger use of EU funds. Contributors express strong support for housing-led approaches as the evidence-based model of choice, alongside calls for its systemic national scale-up. Respondents stress the need for person-centred, integrated approaches connecting housing with health, social, employment and education services. Prevention, through early warning systems, eviction safeguards, rent mediation and debt support, is identified as underfunded and underdeveloped. Contributors also call for harmonised data collection using the ETHOS classification, and stronger EU-level monitoring including through the European Semester. The disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups - Roma, persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ people, women and single mothers, children, young people leaving care, migrants, and large families, is also highlighted.

Between 25 July and 24 October 2025, the Commission carried out a public consultation on the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy that contributed to shaping the content of this proposal. This proposal is part of the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy package. Targeted consultations with people experiencing poverty in the context of the development of the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy took place in September and October 2025.

This proposal also builds on the results of the public consultation carried out by the Commission as part of the development of the European Affordable Housing Plan which took place between 11 July and 17 October 2025. This consultation included questions designed to gather participants' views on ensuring affordable and accessible housing for people in vulnerable situations, at risk of discrimination, or who are homeless. This consultation was

part of the Affordable Housing Dialogue launched by the Commission to prepare the plan, and yielded more than 13 000 responses.

The European Platform on Combatting Homelessness was consulted on the contents of this proposal through a written consultation in January 2026. The Platform includes all relevant stakeholders that are responsible for the fight against homelessness - the European Commission, the European Parliament, Member States, the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee, social partners and relevant European.

- **Collection and use of expertise**

The evidence underpinning this initiative is based on the **work carried out under the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness since 2021.**

Under the Mutual Learning work strand of the Platform, several studies⁷ were commissioned to inform and support Member States in their efforts to design and implement national strategies combating housing exclusion and homelessness. These studies suggest that tackling homelessness requires shifting from emergency responses to housing-led solutions—providing immediate, stable housing with tailored support. This approach breaks costly cycles of temporary shelters and highlights affordable housing as a key preventive measure.

The OECD Toolkit to Combat Homelessness⁸ provides strategies for reducing homelessness through preventive and reactive measures, to create effective, long-term solutions and emphasises data-driven policies, integrated support, housing stability, tailored approaches, and cross-sector collaboration. The OECD Monitoring Framework⁹ aims to improve the understanding and measurement of homelessness by setting consistent international standards for data collection and analysis. It emphasises the importance of using comprehensive, comparable metrics that reflect the multifaceted nature of homelessness.

The European Homelessness Count¹⁰ pilot project developed and tested a comparable methodology of counting and profiling homelessness across the EU. The project uses a harmonised approach based on the ETHOS Light¹¹ definition.

For an extensive analysis of the link between poverty and housing exclusion, the report by the European Social Policy Analysis Network¹² provides a comparative analysis of the intersection of homelessness and anti-poverty policies across the EU.

⁷ O’Sullivan, E., ‘Key Elements in Homelessness Strategies to End Homelessness by 2030’ School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland.

Mackie, P., ‘Preventive Measures against Homelessness and Housing Exclusion’ by School of Geography and Planning, Cardiff University, Wales, UK.

Pleace, N., ‘Social and healthcare services for homeless people’ by, Centre for Housing Policy, School for Business and Society, University of York, UK.

⁸ [OECD Toolkit to Combat Homelessness | OECD](#)

⁹ [OECD Monitoring Framework to Measure Homelessness | OECD](#)

¹⁰ [KU Leuven EU - Homelessness Counts](#)

¹¹ ETHOS Light is a streamlined, harmonized European framework used to measure homelessness and housing exclusion designed to identify various forms of homelessness.

¹² Baptista, I., Perista, P. and Marlier, E. (2025). The fight against homelessness and its links with anti-poverty policies across the European Union. European Social Policy Analysis Network (ESPAN), Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/fight-against-homelessness-and-its-links-anti-poverty-policies-across-european-union_en#description.

- **Impact assessment**

An impact assessment is not envisaged, because the chosen instrument - a Council recommendation - is non-binding and the choice of implementation will be with the Member States. The proposal for the Council recommendation is supported by the staff working document accompanying the Anti-Poverty Strategy.

The impact of the recommendation will depend not only on how Member States implement the measures. National circumstances, such as the macroeconomic situation, the design of social protection systems and social services and the functioning of housing systems, are also important and make it difficult to isolate the specific impact of the proposal from other factors.

- **Fundamental rights**

The proposal will contribute to safeguarding the right to human dignity (Article 1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union), to social security benefits and social services, to social and housing assistance and to a decent existence for all those who lack sufficient resources (Article 34 of the Charter).

4. BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS

The recommendation has no direct budgetary implications for the Union. It encourages Member States to make effective use of existing national resources and relevant Union funding instruments, including the ESF+, the ERDF, Erasmus+, InvestEU and the RRF, in line with their respective rules and instruments under the next MFF.

5. OTHER ELEMENTS

- **Implementation plans and monitoring, evaluation and reporting arrangements**

Progress in implementing this recommendation will be monitored through the following existing frameworks at EU level:

- the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness will provide input from the broader expert community and stakeholders, including organisations representing people experiencing homelessness;
- the Social Protection Committee will provide the necessary policy guidance and the input from Member States;
- the European Semester will feature analysis and assessment of social and economic policies related to housing exclusion and homelessness.

Progress will be assessed based on available Eurostat official statistics and on the improved, comprehensive and comparable data that the proposed Recommendation aims to promote. Member States are recommended to report every five years to the Commission on the results of their national monitoring activities and on progress made in implementing this Recommendation.

- **Explanatory documents (for directives)**

n/a

- **Detailed explanation of the specific provisions of the proposal**

Paragraph 1 indicates the objectives of this recommendation.

Paragraph 2 contains definitions, which are to be applied for the purpose of the recommendation.

The section on cross-cutting recommendations is the core of the recommendation and it recommends Member States to revise or adopt national frameworks to combat housing exclusion through person-centred, housing-led policies. It further recommends setting clear, time-bound objectives on ensuring emergency shelter for all rough sleepers, and swiftly moving people from temporary housing into secure long-term accommodation.

The section on identification of persons at risk of housing exclusion covers data collection, the establishment of eligibility criteria across relevant services, early-warning systems to identify households at risk, and targeted outreach for undercounted groups.

The section on prevention of housing exclusion covers retention of adequate housing, access to information, adequate income assessment, eviction protection, child protection, care leavers, early intervention for children and young people, older people and institutional transitions.

The section on support to people experiencing homelessness addresses support systems and services, preservation of family unity, coordination between services, labour market activation, financial inclusion, access to housing, shelter capacity in line with needs, peer-led support, and countering discrimination.

The section on access to adequate and secure housing solutions refers to housing-led approaches, person-centred support services, provision of social and affordable housing, financial support and incentives for access to housing, providing support to young people (including students), and supporting place-based policies and housing adaptations.

The section on monitoring, evaluation and governance recommends that Member States implement monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure effective policy responses. It also recommends that Member States put in place a sound governance framework involving all stakeholders, making use of EU funding and supporting the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness.

Proposal for a

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

on fighting housing exclusion

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 292, in conjunction with Article 153(1), point (j), thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

Whereas:

- (1) Pursuant to Article 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union, the Union combats social exclusion and discrimination and promotes social justice and protection. Pursuant to Article 151 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the Union and the Member States have as their objectives, amongst others, the promotion of employment, improved living and working conditions, proper social protection and the combating of exclusion.
- (2) Article 34 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union sets out the recognition and respect for the right to social and housing assistance to ensure a decent existence for all those who lack sufficient resources, in accordance with the rules laid down by Union law and national laws and practices.
- (3) Article 31 of the European Social Charter (revised)¹³ confirms the commitment of all parties to promote access to housing of an adequate standard, to prevent and reduce homelessness with a view to its gradual elimination and to make the price of housing accessible to those without adequate resources.
- (4) In November 2017, the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the Commission proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights¹⁴. Its principle 19 provides for the right to access to social housing, housing assistance of good quality and protection against forced eviction for those in need. It also states that adequate shelter and services are to be provided to the homeless to promote their social inclusion.
- (5) Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 establishing a European Child Guarantee¹⁵ calls on Member States to ensure, among other things, effective access for children in need to adequate housing, with specific attention to preventing and addressing homelessness among children and families. The Council Recommendation

¹³ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list?module=treaty-detail&treatynum=163>.

¹⁴ [Interinstitutional Proclamation on the European Pillar of Social Rights](#).

¹⁵ [Council Recommendation 2021/1004 of 14 June 2021 on establishing a European Child Guarantee](#).

(2023/C41/01) on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion¹⁶ calls for comprehensive strategies that combine adequate income support, inclusive labour markets, and access to enabling and essential services, including housing. The Council Recommendation (C/2023/1344) on developing social economy framework conditions¹⁷ calls on Member States to acknowledge and support the role of the social economy in providing accessible and high-quality social and care services and housing, also taking into consideration disadvantaged groups, in close cooperation with publicly available social services.

- (6) Council Recommendation (2021/C 93/01) on Roma equality, inclusion and participation¹⁸ calls on Member States to ensure equal treatment of Roma people in access to, among other things, adequate desegregated housing and essential services.¹⁹ The LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy 2026-2030 stresses that discrimination and a lack of social acceptance contribute to high levels of poverty and homelessness among LGBTIQ+ people. In the Communication “Enhancing the strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities until 2030”, the Commission calls for ensuring access to affordable and accessible housing for persons with disabilities.
- (7) Council Recommendation (2022/C 476/01) on access to affordable high-quality long-term care²⁰ calls on Member States to expand formal long-term care services, especially home and community-based care. Housing that is adapted to an individual’s needs for evolving care needs is a fundamental prerequisite for ageing in place, enabling the provision of home-based care and helping to avoid unnecessary recourse to residential care.
- (8) Directive 2014/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on the comparability of fees related to payment accounts, payment account switching and access to payment accounts with basic features²¹ (“the Payment Accounts Directive”) states in art 16(2) that Member States shall ensure that consumers legally resident in the Union, including consumers with no fixed address, have the right to open and use a payment account with basic features with credit institutions located in their territory. Such a right shall apply irrespective of the consumer’s place of residence.
- (9) The Lisbon Declaration on the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness²², was adopted on 21 June 2021 by EU institutions, Member States, social partners, and civil society organisations. It commits all its signatories to work towards ending homelessness in the European Union by 2030 and launch a European Platform on Combatting Homelessness to promote the design and implementation of person-centred, housing-led and integrated approaches.

¹⁶ [Council Recommendation 2023/C 41/01 of 30 January 2023 on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion.](#)

¹⁷ [Council Recommendation C/2023/1344 of 27 November 2023 on developing social economy framework conditions.](#)

¹⁸ [Council Recommendation 2021/C 93/01 of 12 March 2021 on Roma equality, inclusion and participation.](#)

¹⁹ Complemented by [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: A Union of Equality: EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation COM/2020/620 final.](#)

²⁰ [Council Recommendation 2022/C 476/01 of 8 December 2022 on access to affordable high-quality long-term care.](#)

²¹ [Directive 2014/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 on the comparability of fees related to payment accounts, payment account switching and access to payment accounts with basic features.](#)

²² Lisbon Declaration on the European Platform on Combating Homelessness (21 June 2021, Lisbon, Portugal).

- (10) The “La Hulpe Declaration”²³, adopted on 16 April 2024 at the High-Level Conference on the European Pillar of Social Rights, acknowledges that homelessness remains an issue in many Member States and calls for continued action on accessible, efficient, green and affordable social housing to meet the housing needs of all, to eradicate homelessness and to promote a “housing first” approach. The Declaration also acknowledges the importance of the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness.
- (11) In its Resolution adopted on 24 November 2020²⁴, the European Parliament stressed that housing is a fundamental human right and called for stronger action from the Commission and Member States to end homelessness in the EU by 2030. In its Resolution adopted on 10 March 2026²⁵, the European Parliament underlined the need for a European approach and solutions to ensure the availability of decent and affordable housing and called on Member States to develop and implement housing-led strategies to reduce homelessness. The Resolution also calls on the Commission to provide policy support to tackle homelessness and to monitor progress in this regard.
- (12) The Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2017/543 of 22 March 2017²⁶ laying down rules for the application of Regulation (EC) No 763/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on population and housing censuses as regards the technical specifications of the topics and of their breakdowns sets out the statistical definitions in relations to homelessness.
- (13) In its Opinion on eradicating homelessness in the European Union²⁷, adopted on 2 December 2021, the European Committee of the Regions welcomed the launch of the Platform and underlined four important strands of action for it, namely mutual learning, promoting access to funding, data collection and policy monitoring, and identifying and helping to upscale promising innovations.
- (14) In its Opinion for an EU framework for national homeless strategies based on the principle of “Housing First”²⁸, adopted on 13 December 2023, the European Economic and Social Committee called for the development of an EU homelessness strategy, making it possible to include national policies to combat homelessness in the European Semester. It also suggested that this strategy should be underpinned by a Council Recommendation on homelessness.
- (15) The 2026 Joint Employment Report²⁹ notes that Member States should take action to support access to quality and affordable housing, social housing or housing assistance, where appropriate, prevent and tackle homelessness as the most extreme form of poverty, address social exclusion through integrated, person-centred and housing-led strategic approaches and promote the renovation of residential and social housing.

²³La Hulpe Declaration on the Future of the European Pillar of Social Rights (16 April 2024, La Hulpe, Belgium).

²⁴https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0314_EN.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

²⁵https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2026-0064_EN.html

²⁶[Commission Implementing Regulation 2017/543 of 22 March 2017 laying down rules for the application of Regulation \(EC\) No 763/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on population and housing censuses as regards the technical specifications of the topics and of their breakdowns.](#)

²⁷[Opinion COR 2021/03911 of the European Committee of the Regions - Eradicating homelessness in the European Union: the local and regional perspective](#)

²⁸[Opinion EESC 2023/01741 of the European Economic and Social Committee on For an EU framework for national homeless strategies based on the principle of ‘Housing First’](#)

²⁹European Commission: Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, [Joint employment report 2026 – As adopted by the EPSCO Council on 9 March 2026](#), Publications Office of the European Union, 2026.

- (16) The European Affordable Housing Plan³⁰ adopted on 16 December 2025, recognises that some social groups are disproportionately impacted by rising housing costs and limited access to social and affordable homes, and that homelessness is a persistent and complex challenge to be addressed through housing-led solutions, such as the ‘Housing First’ approach, accompanied by integrated approaches to combat poverty and exclusion.
- (17) Homelessness remains the most extreme and visible manifestation of poverty and social exclusion in the European Union. It affects individuals and families across all Member States, and undermines the principles of dignity, equality, and social justice on which the Union is founded. Despite the efforts made to date, homelessness is on the rise in several Member States and it is estimated to affect more than one million people³¹.
- (18) Housing exclusion refers to the inability of an individual or household to access or maintain decent, stable housing that meets basic standards of safety, legal security, and affordability. Homelessness is its most visible and extreme form and it includes people sleeping rough and in emergency and temporary accommodation for the homeless. However, housing exclusion is broader and includes those who have a roof over their heads but live in conditions that are inadequate and/or insecure. Insecure housing occurs when individuals encounter threats of eviction, domestic abuse, or hold unstable tenancy agreements. Inadequate housing occurs when individuals occupy dwellings of sub-standard quality that lack basic facilities (such as indoor flushing toilets or washing facilities). These dwellings can be in very poor conditions, in a severely overcrowded situation or not adapted to people with additional needs (such as the elderly, persons with disabilities and those with long-term care needs).
- (19) Housing is a key social determinant of health and social inclusion, and the lack of housing or poor-quality housing can be detrimental to health, well-being, employment and educational opportunities of individuals and communities.
- (20) Housing exclusion and homelessness are driven by a complex interaction of structural, institutional, and personal factors. These include poverty, unemployment, a lack of social and affordable housing, discrimination, poor mental and physical health, substance abuse, and domestic violence.
- (21) In 2024, nearly 6% of people aged 16 years or over in the Union who were looking for housing in the last 5 years, reported that they had felt discriminated against at least once. The share of those who felt discriminated against was twice as high for people at risk of poverty or social exclusion (10%) compared with those not at risk (5%). Around 17% of the Union population in 2024 were living in an overcrowded home.
- (22) The lack of social and affordable housing is a major obstacle in the fight against housing exclusion and homelessness. Between 2013 and 2024, house prices in nominal terms have increased by more than 60% across the Union, growing faster than household income, with few Member States experienced average increases up to more than 220% in nominal prices. At the same time, average rents have risen by around 20% while in general, new rental contracts are significantly more expensive than the older ones, especially in urban and touristic areas. Housing costs, including water, electricity, gas and other fuels, have increased in 17 Member States, compared to the

³⁰[Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions COM/2025/1025 final: The European Affordable Housing Plan](#)

³¹[OECD Affordable Housing Database | OECD](#)

Union average, with an increase up to more than 80% above the EU average in some Member States and decreased in 10 other Member States.

- (23) Investments in housing supply have declined markedly over the last decade. Supply has not kept up with rising demand due to high construction costs, innovation deficits, shortages of skilled labour and excessive red tape. In particular, construction prices in the Union have risen by 56% between 2010 and 2024, with some Member States seeing increases of more than 170%. Residential building permits (number of dwellings) have fallen by 22% between 2021 and 2024 and the existing housing stock has not been used to its full potential, with around 20% of dwellings across the EU remaining vacant or underoccupied (including seasonal or secondary residences and housing units purchased as investments and not used as primary residences)
- (24) In this context, increasing the supply of social and affordable housing is crucial to tackling housing exclusion. In particular, new investments are needed to support the construction of new dwellings, renovation, and when possible, using the existing underoccupied and unoccupied (20% dwellings) more efficiently, including via incentivising renting private owned properties, repurposing of existing building stock e.g. of office buildings. The revision of State aid rules on Services of General Economic Interest as part of the European Affordable Housing Plan and the Mid-term Regulation for the review of the EU Cohesion policy funds³² contribute to developing an enabling framework for investments in social and affordable housing (by March 2026 at least EUR about 3.3 billion were reallocated by the Member States and regions to affordable and sustainable housing under the mid-term review). The mid-term regulatory flexibilities and the possibility for a higher Union co-financing rate for housing investments remain available to support further reprogramming until 2029-2030.
- (25) In line with the principles of the New European Bauhaus, access to adequate, sustainable, affordable and quality housing should be considered part of a broader social and territorial ecosystem that supports inclusion, community life, labour mobility, access to education and training, health, long-term care, independent living and the social cohesion. Housing policies are more effective and create an added social value where they are combined with place-based measures, community infrastructure and services and designed to promote inclusive and sustainable neighbourhoods that meet the needs of the inhabitants
- (26) To expand supply and affordability, Member States can take advantage of different housing models, including social and public housing, cost-rental and limited-profit housing, housing cooperatives, social rental agencies and other non-profit or public-interest models. These models, often delivered by social economy organisations, can contribute to long-term affordability, reduce exposure to speculation and help mobilise existing dwellings, land and investment. Innovative cohabitation concepts, including intergenerational living, co-housing and shared-space arrangements, can also help address social isolation, under-occupation of buildings and local housing shortages. Mutual learning can help to identify successful models already implemented in other Member States.
- (27) Scaling up social and affordable housing supply requires stable governance and investment frameworks, including public-private partnerships, and cooperation

³²[Regulation 2025/1914 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 September 2025 amending Regulations 2021/1058 and 2021/1056 as regards specific measures to address strategic challenges in the context of the mid-term review.](#)

between public authorities, social economy organisations, social and affordable housing providers, educational institutions, employers, financial institutions and other stakeholders. Blended finance, revolving funds, public guarantees, long-term leases on public land and other public-interest financing mechanisms can help mobilise patient capital and support long-term affordability. In addition, Member States can also promote and support innovative and inclusive bottom-up housing projects, where future residents plan and finance their housing project collectively.

- (28) Housing exclusion and homelessness may disproportionately affect certain populations, with the scale and composition of those affected varying significantly depending on national / regional circumstances. Certain people and groups may face particular disadvantages in access to housing and a higher risk of housing exclusion or homelessness. These include young people (such as students unable to afford or access student housing; or those leaving institutional or alternative care), unemployed people, vulnerable families (including single parents) with children, victims and survivors of gender-based violence, persons with disabilities or long-term care needs, older people in precarious housing situation, people with a Roma background, people with a migrant background, people belonging to racial or ethnic minorities and LGBTIQ+ people.
- (29) Prevention of housing exclusion and homelessness, combined with access to adequate and secure housing and comprehensive, person-centred support services, is the most effective approach to ending homelessness. Therefore, Member States should be invited to establish effective prevention policies which encompass universal prevention measures, upstream interventions targeting high-risk population, crisis prevention for persons and households facing imminent homelessness, and emergency-stage interventions prevention to secure urgent access to temporary accommodation.
- (30) Early intervention tools such as rent and mortgages arrears mediation, debt counselling, legal assistance concerning tenants and landlord rights, early-warning systems, and short-term financial support are not consistently available across Member States, and strengthening these mechanisms is essential to preventing housing exclusion effectively.
- (31) Preventing forced and arbitrary evictions and support during relocations requires a fair legal framework for tenants' security and landlords' rights. Cooperation with local authorities, social services, and mediation options, including the social rental agencies, can reduce housing instability and ease transitions.
- (32) Housing-led approaches, including the Housing First model, which combine rapid access to permanent housing with personalised and integrated support services, have demonstrated sustainable positive outcomes in preventing and reducing housing exclusion and homelessness and promoting social and economic integration.
- (33) Administrative requirements for accessing assistance, including the obligation to provide proof of permanent residence, may create barriers for people experiencing homelessness or housing exclusion. Removing or adapting such requirements, where appropriate, can improve the take-up of available support and help tackle the root causes of housing exclusion.
- (34) Rising housing costs and limited access to social and affordable housing hinders labour market mobility, as individuals may be unable to move to areas where employment opportunities are available. This can affect competitiveness and economic

growth. Addressing housing affordability and availability is crucial to support labour market participation and ensure the efficient functioning of labour markets.

- (35) Differences in definitions, monitoring systems and data collection methodologies used across Member States limit the availability of comparable data on homelessness at Union level.
- (36) Reliable, comprehensive, and regularly collected data and statistical evidence on housing exclusion and homelessness are crucial for effective policy design, monitoring, and evaluation, which helps to assess progress without increasing administrative burden.
- (37) Tackling housing exclusion and homelessness requires cross-sectoral coordination and multi-level governance involving the European Union, national, regional, and local authorities, alongside civil society, social economy organisations, housing providers, and people with lived experience of homelessness.
- (38) Partnerships with organisations offering support to homeless people and people facing housing exclusion more broadly can strengthen public efforts to offer services that foster social inclusion and create stable housing solutions for specific target groups. By providing additional services such as work integration, social economy organisations can help ensure a transition to a stable life.
- (39) Effective action to prevent and reduce housing exclusion requires adequate and stable, funding, as well as the efficient use and coordination of available Union, national, regional, and local financial resources, in accordance with Member States' competences and budgetary frameworks.
- (40) The European Platform on Combatting Homelessness is the established cooperation framework at EU level on homelessness and housing exclusion. It provides collaborative forum for knowledge building, mutual learning, and cooperation among Member States and stakeholders, contributing to evidence-based policymaking and stronger implementation capacity. It is the established governance framework at EU level on homelessness and housing exclusion.
- (41) The signatories of the Lisbon Declaration on the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness committed themselves to work towards the ending of homelessness by 2030, so that:
 - (i) no one sleeps rough for lack of accessible, safe and appropriate emergency accommodation;
 - (ii) no one lives in emergency or transitional accommodation longer than is required for successful a move to a permanent housing solution;
 - (iii) no one is discharged from any institution (e.g. prison, hospital, care facility) without an offer of appropriate housing;
 - (iv) evictions should be prevented whenever possible and no one is evicted without assistance for an appropriate housing solution, when needed;
 - (v) no one is discriminated against due to their homelessness status.
- (42) 'ETHOS', the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion, was developed as a framework to improve understanding and measurement of homelessness in Europe, and to provide a common "language" for transnational exchanges on homelessness. The ETHOS classification includes all living situations that amount to forms of homelessness and housing exclusion, namely:

- rooflessness (without a shelter of any kind, sleeping rough);
- houselessness (with a place to sleep but temporary in institutions or shelter);
- living in insecure housing (threatened with severe exclusion due to insecure tenancies, eviction, domestic violence, living temporarily with family/friends);
- living in inadequate housing (in temporary or non-conventional structures, in unfit housing, in extreme overcrowding).

HAS ADOPTED THIS RECOMMENDATION

SUBJECT MATTER

- (1) This Recommendation provides guidance on combatting social exclusion, and in particular:
 - (a) on supporting Member States in preventing and addressing housing exclusion of vulnerable persons in, or at-risk of, precarious housing situations and of homeless persons;
 - (b) on promoting the design, implementation and improvement of national, regional and/or local strategic frameworks based on person-centred, housing-led and integrated policies.

DEFINITIONS

- (2) For the purpose of this Recommendation, the following definitions apply:
 - (a) ‘housing exclusion’ means situations in which individuals or households lack access to adequate and/or secure housing. It encompasses notably homeless people (i.e. the roofless or houseless) and those living involuntarily in precarious housing situations, such as in inadequate or insecure housing;
 - (b) ‘emergency accommodation’ means accommodation, such as night shelters, whose primary purpose is to address an urgent need for shelters and access to basic facilities;
 - (c) ‘temporary accommodation’ means time-limited housing that is provided while a permanent housing solution is being sought for;
 - (d) ‘housing-led approaches’ means policy and service delivery models that prioritise the provision of rapid access to adequate, affordable and permanent housing, accompanied, where necessary, by integrated, person-centred support services for housing stability and social inclusion, such as Housing First.

CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATIONS

- (3) Member States are recommended to:
 - (a) adopt or revise strategic frameworks on fighting housing exclusion and homelessness on the basis of person-centred, housing-led and integrated policies in line with this Recommendation, with a view to reinforcing efforts towards ending homelessness in the European Union. This should be done with

- the involvement and participation of regional and local authorities and respecting the distribution of competences within Member States;
- (b) define, with respect to national contexts, precarious housing situations, in particular taking into account poverty or social exclusion risks;
 - (c) develop tailored measures to fight housing exclusion and homelessness and adopt a person-centred approach drawing, where appropriate, on the principles of the New European Bauhaus, including participatory, place-based and inclusive design, with the provision of integrated services like social assistance, healthcare, long-term care and labour market activation, combined with housing assistance;
 - (d) set relevant, time-bound, achievable and measurable objectives, including the following:
 - i/ every person sleeping rough (those in ‘primary homelessness’³³, sleeping in the streets without taking shelter in any living quarters) receives an offer of emergency accommodation;
 - ii/ people living in emergency or temporary accommodation (those in ‘secondary homelessness’) receive effective support to access to long-term and secure housing solutions as soon as possible.

IDENTIFICATION OF PERSONS EXPERIENCING OR AT RISK OF HOUSING EXCLUSION

- (4) Member States are recommended to:
 - (a) strengthen data collection on hard-to-reach groups, including homeless persons, and, without excessive administrative burden, develop regular, comprehensive, comparable and disaggregated statistics on housing exclusion and homelessness at national and local levels;
 - (b) align criteria for identifying people experiencing, or at risk of, housing exclusion, across relevant services, such as social, employment, education, justice, and child protection services, and build up rapid effective and timely information-sharing between these services;
 - (c) on the basis of the data collected and the aligned criteria for identifying housing exclusion, establish early-warning systems to identify households at risk of housing exclusion, ensuring timely outreach and prevention support; quantify and assess the housing needs of homeless persons and those in precarious housing situations; develop tailored identification strategies for those frequently undercounted or hidden.

PREVENTION OF HOUSING EXCLUSION

- (5) Member States are recommended to:

³³[Commission Implementing Regulation 2017/543 of 22 March 2017 laying down rules for the application of Regulation \(EC\) No 763/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on population and housing censuses as regards the technical specifications of the topics and of their breakdowns.](#)

- (a) support, in their strategic frameworks, those at risk of housing exclusion to retain adequate housing through targeted measures including debt and housing counselling, early-warning systems, emergency rental assistance, mediation, and other mitigation actions. Ensure the availability of adapted housing for persons with disabilities or long-term care needs, while avoiding disproportionate burdens on construction and renovation;
- (b) ensure timely and effective access to information on available housing, social and income support measures, and conduct outreach to reduce non-take-up of entitlements;
- (c) regularly assess the adequacy of income support, including housing-related allowances, minimum income and child benefits, in relation to housing costs, with adjustment mechanisms responsive to cost trends. This assessment should also serve as evidence to avoid the creation of poverty traps, whereby social support creates labour disincentives;
- (d) strengthen the prevention from and protection against forced and arbitrary evictions, particularly for families with children, with special attention to single-parent households. Member States should ensure transparent, timely procedures respecting proportionality, due process and effective remedies, while respecting landlords' rights;
- (e) ensure that no child lacks adequate housing, guaranteeing timely and suitable alternative accommodation when needed, while preserving family unity in child's best interest;
- (f) ensure that no minor or young adult leaves institutional or foster care without adequate housing and support services. Access to financial support or incentives should be facilitated for those lacking guarantors or funds for deposits for example through social economy organisations facilitating access to microfinance;
- (g) put in place early preventive counselling in educational establishments, work or youth institutional settings to help detect situations of distress, facilitate appropriate referrals to the competent services and prevent housing exclusion among children and young people;
- (h) make counselling and social support available for older persons in precarious housing situations to prevent housing exclusion;
- (i) ensure equal treatment of people at risk of discrimination in access to adequate housing and essential services;
- (j) provide timely, personalised support for people leaving institutions, such as prisons, hospitals and care facilities to secure long-term housing.

SUPPORT TO PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

- (6) To reduce the length of time that people experience homelessness or rely on emergency or temporary accommodation, Member States are recommended to provide a person-centred, integrated and accessible support through:

- (a) accessible and inclusive support systems, including, for example, individual needs assessment, tailored support plans and case management for the most complex cases; by outreach and community-based multi-disciplinary teams involving health and care professionals and social workers;
- (b) standards ensuring consistent, high-quality support services, including child-specific support;
- (c) a one-stop-shop approach with timely, simplified referrals to relevant social security agencies, social assistance, and low-barrier social and health services;
- (d) support systems helping prevent unnecessary family separation, in the best interests of the child and ensuring that no child remains roofless or in emergency shelters, temporary accommodation or other forms of homelessness;
- (e) active employment support, including by facilitating registration with the employment services, and developing personalised pathways to employment, social and job-retention support and support for employers;
- (f) ensuring that people experiencing homelessness are informed of their rights under Union legislation³⁴ to open and use a payment account with basic features with credit institutions located in their territory, irrespective of whether they have a fixed address;
- (g) expanding access to stable housing solutions for homeless people, particularly families with children, through cooperation with housing providers, social rental agencies and inclusive allocation mechanisms, and through cooperative and community-based models accompanied by appropriate support services;
- (h) ensuring that emergency and temporary accommodation, including gender-segregated accommodation, is available, safe, accessible and sufficient to meet the needs of all people experiencing homelessness, including for victims of domestic and sexual violence, while supporting their transition to stable housing;
- (i) recognising and supporting the role of people with lived experience of homelessness in improving trust, access and the effectiveness of support services measures facilitating access to social inclusion and housing;
- (j) measures to prevent and address stigmatisation and discriminatory practices in access to housing such as transparent criteria for social housing waiting lists, anti-bias training for housing professionals and support services for tenants facing discrimination.

ACCESS TO ADEQUATE AND SECURE HOUSING SOLUTIONS

- (7) Member States are recommended to boost the supply of social and affordable housing, in response to demographic needs, local shortages and territorial disparities, in particular by:
 - (a) promoting long-term rentals conditions for private landlords and tenants by:

³⁴ [Directive 2014/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 on the comparability of fees related to payment accounts, payment account switching and access to payment accounts with basic features.](#)

- ensuring a legal framework that facilitates widespread use of long-term rental contracts,
 - allowing, where appropriate, the targeted use of proportionate tax and financial incentives for landlords to offer long-term housing solutions, in particular for families and young people,
 - decreasing the legal uncertainty and duration of eviction procedures and
 - balancing long-term rental stock being used for short-term rental purposes when duly justified by the housing crisis;
- (b) incentivising both public and private investments in new built, renovation or repurposing of existing buildings to expand social and affordable housing stock;
- (c) enabling and supporting affordability-oriented housing models, including social and public housing, housing cooperatives, limited-profit housing associations, community land trusts as well as other social rental agencies and other limited profit or non-profit approaches;
- (d) promoting and scaling up innovative cohabitation concepts, such as shared living spaces, cluster housing, co-housing and intergenerational housing arrangements, including with shared facilities and support services where relevant; and facilitating temporary and transitional housing models for students and young people, for instance matching students with residents in underused dwellings;
- (e) streamlining national, regional and local planning and permitting procedures for faster housing construction, while pursuing social inclusion and spatial cohesion, and reducing administrative barriers affecting construction services providers supporting the timely delivery of new social and affordable housing where needed, including through the use and mobilisation of public land, while ensuring that it is well-connected to essential socioeconomic services and activities;
- (f) enhancing the efficient use of existing housing stock, in particular by facilitating the repurposing, renovation and reuse of existing buildings and by mobilising vacant dwellings and public properties, limiting as much as possible unnecessary demolitions;
- (g) improving availability of and access to shelters and transitional housing, until permanent housing solutions are available;
- (h) dedicating a set share of new housing developments to social and affordable housing, reflecting local housing needs.
- (8) Complementing efforts to boost housing supply, Member States are recommended to put in place adequate, predictable and sustainable funding and investment frameworks in their national strategies. Member States are also recommended to make full use of the EU funding and tools available, including the forthcoming Pan-European Investment Platform for affordable and sustainable housing announced in the European Affordable Housing Plan³⁵. These measures can help optimise the use

³⁵[Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions COM/2025/1025 final: The European Affordable Housing Plan.](#)

of national and Union resources and scale up long-term, inclusive and affordable housing solutions, including by:

- (a) aligning and coordinating resources across housing, social inclusion, employment, education, health, long-term care, urban regeneration and renovation policies, to boost policy coherence and impact;
 - (b) ensuring that publicly supported action includes, where appropriate, clear conditions on affordability, accessibility, sustainability and inclusive allocation of housing and links to community-based services;
 - (c) implementing innovative financing models, such as revolving funds, blended financing and public guarantees, to support the long-term affordability of housing supply and to mobilise both public and private capital for affordable and social housing;
 - (d) discouraging speculative behaviours in the housing market, including by designing effective taxation policies and improving market transparency;
 - (e) supporting project development and technical assistance for local and regional authorities, social economy organisations and limited or non-profit housing providers;
 - (f) promoting public-private partnerships, including with local authorities, higher education institutions, employers, housing providers and social economy organisations to deliver social and affordable housing, including student, trainee and mixed-use housing projects;
 - (g) stepping up investments to support the construction and renovation of affordable and social housing, including through taking up financial instruments and blended funding under the current cohesion policy, while using the flexibilities offered under its mid-term review,³⁶ to re-allocate EU funding towards affordable housing; and leveraging the reviewed Services of General Economic Interest State aid rules³⁷, which contain dedicated categories for both social and affordable housing.
- (9) Member States are recommended to support people experiencing housing exclusion in accessing and retaining stable housing through:
- (a) promoting access to permanent housing, in line with a housing-led approach, sustained funding and a cross-sectoral coordination of measures including access to the labour market and other services;
 - (b) putting in place adequate and appropriate integrated support services addressing not only the transition to but also the retention of adequate and secure housing. These should include house-search support, up and reskilling and support to access and retain employment, financial and legal assistance, life-skills training and follow-up support to prevent individuals from experiencing housing exclusion again;

³⁶[Regulation 2025/1914 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 September 2025 amending Regulations 2021/1058 and 2021/1056 as regards specific measures to address strategic challenges in the context of the mid-term review.](#)

³⁷[Commission Decision 2025/2630 of 16 December 2025 on the application of Article 106\(2\) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to State aid in the form of public service compensation granted to certain undertakings entrusted with the operation of services of general economic interest and repealing Decision 2012/21.](#)

- (c) increasing the availability of adequate housing solutions for people experiencing housing exclusion, in particular parents with children, and ensure that they are taken into account and prioritised in the allocation mechanisms for social housing;
 - (d) providing adequate financial support such as rent guarantees, low-interest loans and housing benefits, accompanied by accessible guidance on how to obtain such support and the necessary financial literacy.
- (10) Member States are recommended to implement targeted measures to support young people on low incomes, including students, who face housing exclusion, which can act as a barrier to accessing and completing higher education, vocational education and training, traineeships or apprenticeship programmes. These measures could include:
- (a) creating and using effective networks between youth welfare services and general social welfare services to help young people find adequate housing solutions that meet their family, education and employment needs;
 - (b) increasing the supply of affordable student housing close to education and training facilities, including for students on study mobility exchanges or an internship abroad;
 - (c) providing accessible guidance and practical support to advise and assist individuals with tenancy rights and administrative procedures, including through counselling centres in educational institutions;
 - (d) providing fiscal incentives, or low-interest loans to help students and young people with limited financial means secure housing.
- (11) Member States are recommended to combine in their national strategic frameworks person-centred policies with place-based ones (such as urban planning and regeneration, local economic development and transport policies) to avoid mismatches between employment opportunities and affordable housing, in particular in areas where there are unfilled employment vacancies.
- (12) Member States are recommended to take measures to support housing adaptations for persons with disabilities and/or older people with long-term care needs, especially those at risk of poverty. This should enable them to live in their homes for as long as possible and avoid housing exclusion. These measures should be designed to avoid disproportionate construction and renovation burdens.

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND GOVERNANCE

- (13) Member States are recommended to:
- (a) put in place targeted monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, based on outcome indicators, to assess the effectiveness of their strategies on fighting housing exclusion and homelessness and provide for policy adjustments where required and without increasing administrative burden;
 - (b) report every five years to the Commission on the results of their national monitoring activities and on progress made in implementing this Recommendation;
 - (c) ensure effective multi-level governance and coordination across national, regional and local authorities, cooperation with relevant stakeholders, including

- universities, vocational education and training providers, local employers, civil society and social economy organisations and housing providers;
- (d) simplify legal and administrative frameworks to reduce administrative burden and ensure timely and simplified access to housing and related social, health, educational, employment and community-based support services;
 - (e) strengthen the capacity and quality of services intended to support people experiencing housing exclusion, including through training, a clear allocation of responsibilities and adequate resources for staff providing those services;
 - (f) in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies to prevent and reduce housing exclusion and homelessness, ensure the meaningful involvement of persons with lived experience of housing exclusion and homelessness, civil society organisations, especially at local levels, and social economy organisations, including food banks;
 - (g) actively contribute to the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness, as a key forum for coordination, exchange and cooperation among stakeholders, in particular through knowledge sharing, evidence building, and facilitating access to funding, and in close synergy with the work streams of the European Housing Alliance;
 - (h) continue cooperating with other Member States, as well as private and public stakeholders at different regional levels to support knowledge sharing, promote mutual learning, ensure consistent service delivery, exchange of best practices, effective policy design and implementation in the area of housing exclusion;
 - (i) strengthen cooperation with the EU advisory bodies (the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee), to improve mutual learning, peer reviews and policy synergies related to housing exclusion;
 - (j) promote the involvement of social partners and civil society organisations that play a key role in the fight against housing exclusion to ensure that EU policies reflect the realities on the ground, including through the involvement of people with lived experience of housing exclusion.

Done at Brussels,

*For the Council
The President*