R7 Necessity and not luxury: Housing as a cornerstone of social justice

Proposer: Executive Committee
Agenda item: 7. Resolutions

Motion text

The Federation of the Young European Greens (FYEG) has noticed the worrying trend of people increasingly struggling to access stable and affordable housing. Throughout the last 30 years, we have been exposed to increasing scarcity to ensure the access to secure and adequate housing for all age groups, but particularly affecting students and youth who are in the modern cultural context focused on social mobility and move abroad to access better opportunities or conditions, where possible. While this is happening, many houses are remaining empty, vacant, abandoned or derelict for various reasons and are being under-utilised. Additionally, there is a serious issue in many countries, particularly in Southern Europe and Mediterranean countries, where whole properties are being used as short-term holiday rentals exclusively for tourism, whilst being left empty or with temporary tenancies during low-tourist seasons. This issue has been evident for a long while and it is increasingly worrying that governments are not doing sufficient work to address the issues of the inaccessibility of affordable housing, while international organisations are devolving work to a lower level of governance.

It is increasingly obvious that youth, particularly those studying or entering the workforce, face unprecedented challenges in securing affordable housing due to wage stagnation, student debt burdens, and increasing rental prices. Many communities across urban and rural areas are experiencing housing shortages, rapidly rising rents, and increasing homelessness rates, leading to social and economic instability. While this is happening, housing is increasingly being treated as a financial asset rather than a fundamental human need, leading to speculative practices that prioritize profit over people. We have additionally seen that this has been negatively affecting everyone affected, as housing stability is directly linked to economic security, health, ability to have access to education and overall well-being.

In response to these issues, FYEG in this year has started working directly with our community in a series of focus group calls, looking at the ground level and assessing the current situation that young people are experiencing all over Europe, while aiming to foster a bottom-up approach to advocacy. FYEG strongly has always and will always call for truly affordable and liveable housing. This

resolution serves as the introduction to our future work, tying in the work that FYEG has done, while connecting all of the member organisations with a strong and clearly defined framework regarding this topic and setting the framework for our collective future work.

Our commitment to social justice has led us to recognizing the importance of stability, housing, and comfort in establishing a just living experience within the modern world. We commit to continue working with our partners, stakeholders, governments and international organisations to ensure that the right to housing is recognized in various international agreements and national frameworks. We will additionally emphasise the need for proactive policies and activism to ensure housing rights align with the lived reality of those affected, rather than investor speculation.

We are concerned that housing is increasingly being used as a revenue model for a minority of wealthy individuals. This treatment of housing as an investment is driving up prices and making access to housing unattainable for many. Additionally, large financial institutions and corporate landlords are accumulating vast amounts of property, sometimes utilising predatory and speculative real estate practices. This monopoly enables them to increase rent and housing prices for the benefit of profits over people. There is a clear lack of checks and balances when it comes to holding these actors legally accountable, and even in situations where laws exist they are not clear enough for renters, or utilising them is prohibitively expensive. Any future development must be done with clear conditionality, ensuring stockpiling of property in this manner is prohibited.

Housing insecurity disproportionately affects vulnerable groups, including young and low-income families, elderly individuals, persons with disabilities, marginalized communities, and individuals experiencing systemic discrimination. This is tied with the fact that gentrification is on the rise and that displacement which is happening due to gentrification is negatively impacting local communities, most often poorer immigrant or racialized communities, pushing residents out of their neighborhoods and disrupting social networks. Young people face significant financial barriers and are forced into renting due to high rental prices, limited savings, and entry-level wages that do not keep pace with inflation. There is a clear feeling that becoming a homeowner in your youth is becoming more and more a thing of the past. Young people are staying longer and longer with their parents, with the average age when people move out of their childhood homes being as high as 32 in some EU countries.

The lack of sufficient investment in public, social and affordable housing programs exacerbates the crisis, leaving many without viable housing options. There is an overall lack of state interventions in the housing market making this worse. This is exemplified by the lack of measures such as rent or price caps, and no expropriation when property is misused such as when it is illegally

rented seasonally or property is accumulated. Another issue is short-term rental platforms especially in city centres, which contribute to housing shortages by reducing the availability of long-term rental units and driving up costs.

This is all not even mentioning that homelessness remains a persistent challenge, and is even on the rise in many metropolises. Many individuals face barriers to stable housing due to inadequate support systems,mental health challenges, and insufficient shelter options. Housing is clearly seen as more a status symbol rather than a necessity, and the mentality that everyone needs to fend for themselves to secure safety is pushing more and more individuals to the margins of society.

With all this in mind, we, the Federation of Young European Greens demands that:

- Governments at all levels start increasing investments in affordable housing initiatives, expand access and visibility of housing subsidies, and implement policies that ensure housing remains affordable for low- and middle-income households, particularly young workers.

- Regulation for housing needs to be updated to ensure that all new construction is sufficient for living standards. Access to space and utilities need to be available for every individual intended to live in a given accommodation unit. Homes should aim to be built with open air spaces readily accessible to tenants and double aspect construction should become the standard, ensuring access to natural lighting at all times of the day.

- Local authorities implement policies that prevent displacement, protect renters’ rights and regulate speculative real estate practices that contribute to housing shortages and the affordability crisis, with a particular focus on rent stabilization measures.

- Legislation is put in place to protect renters’ rights, and define the role of tenant unions and housing cooperatives, which represent a neglected aspect in solving housing shortages and community building.

- Community organizations, housing advocates, and stakeholders to engage in collaborative efforts to address housing insecurity, provide direct assistance, and promote long-term solutions that ensure accessibility and inclusivity.

- European research institutions must continue studying the impact of housing policies, provide data-driven recommendations for improvement, and explore innovative housing models, such as cooperative housing and community land trusts, with a focus on youth housing programs.

- European policymakers adopt a holistic approach to housing, integrating social services, employment programs, and mental health resources to support individuals and families, particularly young adults, in achieving long-term stability.

- European governments ensure conditionality in future affordable, low rent housing development projects, thereby ensuring that these homes will go to the individuals and families who need them most. Additionally, clear goals related to what affordability is when it relates to housing must be set and regularly updated.More high-density, mixed income housing is built by the state and municipalities in locations where the housing crisis is particularly dire. Priorities for minorities and immigrant communities with lack of access to housing must be enshrined.

- The European Union to take action against the excessive financialization of housing by implementing regulations that prevent speculative practices, discourage corporate hoarding of residential properties, and prioritize housing as a public good over its use as a wealth-building instrument for a select few.

- The European Green Party and its member parties must actively fight to enshrine the rights to affordable, safe housing in their political programmes, and practice campaigning on this topic, as it is a cornerstone of social justice.

Reason

As the housing crises rages on we realised the necessity to address the issues related to secure and affordable housing that most young greens have personally felt. This resolution is being proposed by the Executive Committee, but the bulk of the text stems from the results of the focus group calls the FYEG Executive Committee and Community Crew did directly with it's membership on the Green Base and should be seen as a starting point for future work that we can do to address the housing crises. Additional input was added based on meetings with different FYEG partners.

Supporters

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