

Housing and regional policy

2006/2108(INI) - 20/03/2007

The committee adopted its own-initiative report drawn by Alfonso ANDRIA (ALDE, IT) on housing and regional policy. The report started from the premise that "the right to adequate housing at reasonable prices is an important fundamental right" and pointed out that the financial instruments supporting cohesion policy could and did play an important role in this area.

The report called for the identification, at European level, of a series of quality indicators defining the concept of 'adequate housing' and stressed the need for the EU to adopt a "European housing charter". In the context of the Lisbon Strategy, the report also highlighted the need to strengthen the right to housing benefits and other social rights, so that worker mobility can become a reality. MEPs also expressed the hope that national and local decision-makers would adopt measures to help young people get their first home.

The committee said that it was necessary, in the rural environment, to propose incentives for the acquisition, rehabilitation and renovation of old buildings, to support public and private bodies providing advice and personalised guidance to private individuals and business people wanting to settle and to improve the supply of public and private, new and renovated social housing.

MEPs also advocated an integrated approach, given the complexity of the issues affecting housing, in order to ensure the simultaneous introduction of various factors which would promote access to housing, improve building quality, improve quality life for all generations and promote the attractiveness of both urban and rural environments. Such an approach would have a greater chance of success if it were adopted by the local and regional authorities, which could provide an overview, optimal coordination of the policies and measures implemented in a particular urban area and a long-term vision of its development. Cities should therefore be involved to a greater extent in the programming and management of structural funding for housing projects.

MEPs expressed their hope that, in the context of the revision of the cohesion policy regulations in 2009, "the debate will be reopened on extending access to Community funds for the renovation of social housing to all Member States" in order to save energy and protect the environment, as this was currently provided for only for certain countries. The Commission and the EIB were urged to implement the Jessica initiative under the same conditions in all countries.

Among other recommendations, the report called on spatial management authorities to take into account the accessibility of housing, public services and urban transport for disabled people and to plan exercise and recreational areas for children and young people. It also encouraged the EIB Group and the Commission to establish a strategy for boosting the building sector, chiefly in the new Member States, which would constitute structural aid for developing housing and involve the mobilisation of local and regional resources geared to urban projects.