



# From market good to social right? Shifting approaches to housing in Europe

June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2021

10h – 11.35h CEST

By-invitation online session (via Teams)

Organised by: CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs)

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Europe was experiencing a crisis of housing affordability largely rooted in the fallout from the global financial crisis of 2008. On any given night in 2019, nearly 700,000 people were sleeping rough in the European Union, a 70% increase since 2009. The rising commodification of housing was reflected in constantly increasing purchase and rental price indices, as well as high burdens among middle- and lower-income households, with one in ten private tenants spending more than 60% of their disposable income on housing (+9.3% since 2010). As a result of these trends, housing advocates, civil society organizations and local governments increasingly called on European institutions to stake out a position on the right to housing. In response to these pressures, initiatives like the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) (2017) or the [Housing Partnership Action Plan](#) of the European Urban Agenda (2018) would include access to social and affordable housing and protection from forced eviction among their principles, marking a shift from an approach to housing centred on regulating its problematic status as a commodity, towards an increasing emphasis on its social function.

The pandemic has only amplified the urgent need for this shift. Throughout the continent, lockdowns and confinement have made housing far too palpable a need to ignore, as one cannot #StayAtHome without a home. Governments have taken exceptional measures and public discourses have changed seemingly overnight. In several Member States, evictions and foreclosures were suspended and emergency shelter, mortgage forbearances and support for utility bills were offered. Tellingly, on 21 January 2021, [the European Parliament called on the European Union to push for measures to eradicate homelessness and recognize access to decent and affordable housing as an enforceable human right](#). Alongside the [European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](#), the [Renovation Wave Strategy](#) and [Next Generation EU](#) funding, an opportunity to guarantee decent housing for all seems to have emerged.

This webinar seeks to discuss this shift towards a new housing scenario, and how these principles can be implemented throughout the European Union. Are the existing normative and legislative frameworks in Europe adequately equipped to address the social challenges posed by the commodification of housing? To what extent can the Renovation Wave and the EU recovery funds facilitate and expand access to social and affordable housing? What role can cities play in guaranteeing decent housing for all? The event will bring together elected city officials, practitioners and scholars to address these questions and share their insights on the role of housing rights in Europe's future.

10.00 – 10.05 **Welcome**  
**Pol Morillas**, Director, CIDOB

10.05 – 10.15 **Presentation of the session**  
*From market good to social right? Shifting approaches to housing in Europe*  
**Carlos Delclós**, Associate Researcher, CIDOB; Postdoctoral Researcher, IGOP-UAB

10:15 – 11.20 **Discussion**

**How to move towards better governance and regulation to support affordability in housing in the EU?**

*We will reflect on how to foster an adequate EU regulatory framework that ensures the right to adequate housing and avoids speculative real estate investment. Specific attention will be given to those legislative changes that can better address the needs of cities.*

**How to invest in affordable housing through the EU budget?**

*This debate will explore how member states and urban governments can invest more in affordable housing under the EU's current fiscal rules. In particular, it will analyze how funding for social, affordable and energy-efficient housing can be provided through the long-term multiannual financial framework for 2021-2027, the Next Generation EU package and the Renovation Wave.*

**Kick-off statements**

*Question 1:*

**Javier Burón**, Housing Manager, City of Barcelona & Vice-Chair of Eurocities Housing WG  
**Juli Ponce**, Full Professor, University of Barcelona

*Question 2:*

**Sorcha Edwards**, Secretary General, Housing Europe  
**Michaela Kauer**, Head of Brussels Office, City of Vienna; Co-coordinator of the EU Urban Agenda Housing Partnership

**Debate among participants:**

**Dominique Bé**, Disability & Inclusion, DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion, European Commission

**Michelle Norris**, Professor of Social Policy, University College Dublin

**Ruth Owen**, Deputy Director, FEANTSA

**Elena Szolgayová**, Co-chair of the Housing 2030

**Lorenzo Vidal**, Postdoctoral Researcher IGOP, CIDOB Associate Researcher

*Debate facilitated by:* **Eva Garcia-Chueca**, Senior Research Fellow, Global Cities Programme, CIDOB

11.20 – 11.30 **Keynote statement**  
*Guaranteeing the Right to Housing in Europe: from legal changes to financial tools*  
**Kim Van Sparrentak**, Member of the European Parliament

11.30 – 11.35 **Wrap-up**  
**Carlos Delclós**, Associate Researcher, CIDOB; Postdoctoral Researcher, IGOP-UAB