



BM76 - Sofia

Resolution: ESU supports the European citizen initiative “housing for all”

Housing became a more and more pressing issue in the European Union and other countries inside the EHEA in recent years. Europe is in a housing crisis, because housing became too expensive, and the waiting lists for subsidised, affordable, and public apartments grow longer and longer. Big and growing cities, often cities where HEIs are located, are particularly affected.

According to Eurostudent VI, accommodation costs continue to be one of the most important if not the most important expenditure item for students. Especially for those who live away from their parents. Therefore, students are a societal group that is particularly affected by the increasing costs of housing.

To give an example, in Austria, students spend an average of 40% of their monthly income on housing. This is unacceptable, since ESU believes that the monthly fee students pay for a decent room within reach their HEI must not exceed a third of their monthly income. Cheap dormitories have become rare and students' accommodation fees have been rising continuously, while students experience a lack of vacancies and extremely long waiting lists in order to be admitted in student housing. The situation in many other countries is very similar. In a survey on the current state of play with regards to student housing in Europe conducted by ESU in 2019, all 18 national unions of 16 countries participating identified housing as a very pressing issue for students in their countries, as there are insufficient affordable housing options. It is mentioned several times that this is also due to an increasing number of private student dormitories.

Housing does really affect access to higher education, as being a major cost factor in students' living cost. Increasing rents in combination with insufficient funds lead to the exclusion from people from lower socio-economic backgrounds from higher education, as they can simply not cover their living costs anymore. Students from rural areas are particularly affected, as they do not have the possibility to stay with their parents since most HEIs are located in bigger cities. However, it is also important to stress the fact that even if students are able to stay with their parents to save rent, this is a clear barrier to their autonomy and personal development. ESU highly stresses every student's right to affordable access to housing in a freely chosen environment. We demand measures to ensure affordable rents and grants that actually reflect living costs.

Increasing rents in European cities are often due to real estate being seen as means of investment. The underlying motivation is about profit and not about providing much-needed housing. This development is to be opposed since housing is a human right - not a commodity. Living space is a basic human need and it is unacceptable to exploit for profit maximization, while a big part of society cannot afford a decent living anymore.

Therefore, ESU urges the EU to take action to facilitate access to affordable housing for everyone, and especially students, and create better legal and financial framework conditions in order to do so. The European citizens initiative “housing for all” does so too and has the following demands in order to achieve this goal:

- easier access for all to affordable, public and social housing,
- not applying the Maastricht criteria to public investment in affordable, public and social housing
- better access to EU funding for public and non-profit housing developers,
- social, competition-based rules for short-term rentals and
- the compilation of statistics on housing needs in Europe on a local level.

ESU agrees with the demands of the European citizens initiative “housing for all” and therefore supports it. Likewise, ESU calls upon all the governments of its member countries that are non-EU countries to take similar actions in order to improve the housing situation for students, and in general.

Proposed by: ÖH, fzs

Seconded by: UNEF, FEF, UDU