

Press release – MEPs: Access to adequate housing should be a fundamental European right



The resolution – adopted by 352 votes in favour, 179 against and 152 abstentions on Thursday – states that decent housing includes access to clean and high-quality drinking water, adequate sanitation and hygiene facilities, as well as connection to sewage and water networks. The right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right that should be enshrined in national and European law, say MEPs.

Minimum mandatory requirements for habitable homes should be introduced at EU level that include healthy indoor air quality and are aligned with WHO guidelines, MEPs urge. They also call on the Commission and member states to prioritise the reduction of emissions and to boost energy efficiency through housing renovation.

Eradicating homelessness by 2030

In many EU countries, rates of homelessness have increased over the last decade due to rising housing costs and social programmes and benefits being cut and suspended. The resolution reiterates [Parliament's earlier call for an EU-wide goal to end homelessness by 2030](#). In addition, exceptional measures to prevent homelessness and protect homeless people in the COVID-19 crisis should be maintained – particularly moratoria on evictions and on disconnection from energy supplies as well as the provision of temporary housing.

Keeping housing affordable

MEPs also call on member states and regional and local authorities to put in place legal provisions to protect the rights of tenants and owner-occupiers.

Housing is considered affordable if the occupant's remaining budget is at least sufficient to cover other essential expenditure. While this threshold is currently set at 40%, more than a quarter of European tenants in commercial housing spend a higher percentage of their income on rent, with average rents constantly increasing.

Finally, MEPs point out that the expansive growth of short-term holiday rental is removing housing from the market and driving prices up, which can make living in urban and tourist centres significantly more difficult.

Quote

Rapporteur [Kim VAN SPARRENTAK](#) said: "European rules are often better at protecting profit generated by the housing market than protecting people who need a roof over their heads. We need the EU to step up its game and use all the tools available to do its part, together with the member states. The report offers concrete solutions for all levels to take action. We can solve the housing crisis if we want to, and we can end homelessness by 2030."

Background

According to [research by Eurofound](#), inadequate housing costs EU economies 195 billion EUR every year. A growing number of people living in the EU find housing difficult to afford and spend a disproportionate amount on housing. In particular, single parents, large families and young people entering the labour market find that their income is insufficient to afford market rents but too high for them to be eligible for social housing.

[Press release – Human rights breaches in Hong Kong, Turkey and Vietnam](#)



The crackdown on the democratic opposition in Hong Kong

Parliament calls for the immediate and unconditional release of representatives of the democratic opposition and activists arrested in Hong Kong in the first two weeks of 2021, as well as all those previously detained on charges of subversion under the National Security Law for Hong Kong.

The same goes for all peaceful Hong Kong protesters, activists and members of the political opposition arrested on politically motivated charges. These include the prominent opposition figures Joshua Wong, Ivan Lam, and Agnes Chow, whose charges should all be dropped, says Parliament.

MEPs regret that the recent decision to reach a political conclusion of the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment did not reflect Parliament's requests to use investment negotiations as a leverage tool to preserve Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy. By rushing to reach this agreement and not taking concrete action against the serious and ongoing human rights violations, the EU risks undermining its credibility as a global human rights actor, they say.

Parliament also urges EU countries to consider introducing targeted sanctions against individuals in Hong Kong and China, including Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam, under the EU Human Rights Global Sanction Regime.

The text was approved by 597 votes in favour, 17 against and 61 abstentions. See the full resolution [here](#). (21.01.2021)

The human rights situation in Turkey, notably the case of Selahattin Demirtaş and other prisoners of conscience

MEPs call for the immediate and unconditional release of Turkish opposition politician, former MP and former presidential candidate Selahattin Demirtaş, who has been detained for more than four years by Turkish authorities on unsubstantiated charges and in spite of two European Court of Human Rights

rulings in favour of his release.

They also demand that all politically motivated charges against him and fellow members of the opposition HDP party be dropped.

Turkey's sustained backsliding on the independence of the judiciary and the disregard shown by the Turkish judiciary and authorities for rulings by the European Court of Human Rights are of great concern, the resolution states. It calls on the Turkish authorities to put an end to its judicial harassment of human rights defenders, academics, journalists, spiritual leaders, lawyers and members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex communities.

MEPs highlight that respecting and applying the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights would go some way to confirming that the desire to turn a new page in EU-Turkey relations, expressed by President Erdoğan and other top government officials on 9 January of this year, is sincere. Improved EU-Turkey relations are fully dependent on, among other things, tangible improvements in respect for democratic principles, the rule of law and fundamental rights within Turkey, they say.

The text was approved by 590 votes in favour, 16 against and 75 abstentions. It will be available in full [here](#). (21.01.2021)

The human rights situation in Vietnam, in particular the case of human rights journalists Pham Chi Dung, Nguyen Tuong Thuy and Le Huu Minh Tuan

Parliament calls on the Vietnamese authorities to immediately and unconditionally release human rights defenders and journalists Pham Chi Dung, Nguyen Tuong Thuy and Le Huu Minh Tuan, as well as all others detained and sentenced in the country for merely exercising their right to freedom of expression, and to drop all charges against them.

MEPs are appalled by and condemn the intensifying crackdown on dissent and the increasing violations of human rights in Vietnam.

They reiterate that respect for human rights constitutes a key foundation of the bilateral relations between Vietnam and the EU and is an essential element of the EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement. Parliament calls on all involved parties to make use of the existing EU-Vietnam agreements to improve the human rights situation in the country. It asks the European Commission and the European External Action Service to carry out an assessment of how the current free trade agreement could affect human rights in Vietnam.

The text was approved by 592 votes in favour, 32 against and 58 abstentions. For additional information on the content, it will be available in full [here](#). (21.01.2021)

EIB Investment Report 2020/2021: European Union is leading the way in green technology investment



Source: Authors' calculations based on PCT data from PATSTAT (Worldwide PATent STATistical Database) and ECOOM (the Centre for Research and Development Monitoring) in Belgium

[Read the full chapter: Innovating for climate change: The green and digital twin transition](#)

Investing in the climate transition

In 2019, EU investment in climate change mitigation increased gradually. In the EU-27, this investment grew 2.7% from a year earlier to EUR 175 billion. EU investment in climate change mitigation is well behind that of China, but ahead of the United States – although the contexts are very different. China invested 2.7% of gross domestic product (GDP) in climate change projects, ahead of 1.3% in the European Union and 0.8% in the United States. However, the European Union has already gone much further in reducing emissions per unit of GDP. It has already picked much of the low-hanging fruit, and its efforts will increasingly have to focus on harder-to-reduce emissions.

However, according to the European Commission, the gap between the European

Union's climate objectives and actual climate investment is growing. Investments in the continent's energy system would need to rise from an average of 1.3% of GDP per year over the last decade to 2.8% of GDP over the next decade if the European Union is to meet its goal of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030. Adding investments in transport brings the total over the next decade up to 3.7% of GDP per year. EU investment in climate change mitigation is thus still insufficient.

Read the full chapters:

[Chapter: Tackling climate change: Investment trends and policy challenges](#)

[Chapter: Climate change risk: Firms' perceptions and responses](#)

[Chapter: Leveraging the financial system to green the European economy](#)

Investing in the digital transformation

The adoption of digital technologies by EU firms is growing, but the gap with the United States has not yet been closed. By 2020, 37% of EU firms had not adopted any new digital technologies, compared to 27% in the United States. Encouragingly, the proportion of digital firms in the European Union grew by nearly 5 percentage points over the 2019 level, albeit the United States saw a comparable increase. The gap with the United States is particularly wide in the construction and service sectors, and in the adoption of technologies associated with the internet of things.

[Read the full chapter: Intangible investment, innovation and digitalisation](#)

How has COVID-19 changed the economic landscape?

EU firms may have to reduce investment by at least 25% because of the pandemic. To repair balance sheets, firms will have to cut investment. The EIB Investment Report estimates that the crisis might lead to cumulative firms' net revenues declining by as much as 13% of EU GDP. To absorb such loss, firms will have to cut investment and increase external finance, which is mostly available only in the form of debt. A trade-off between leverage and investment might thus emerge. Our latest EU-wide survey of firms shows that 45% of businesses expect to cut investment in the coming year, while only 6% expect to increase it.

Moreover, uncertainty about the future grew to become a major deterrent to investment. Uncertainty indicators spiked at the beginning of the pandemic. Although the European Union's determined economic policy response succeeded in calming short-term fears, a high degree of uncertainty about the future course of the pandemic and the resulting economic crisis remains. 81% of EU firms cite uncertainty as the most serious barrier to investment.

Read the full chapters:

[Chapter: The macroeconomic environment](#)

[Chapter: Gross fixed capital formation](#)

Chapter: Financing corporate investment

Background information

About the Report

The EIB annual report on Investment and Investment Finance is a product of the EIB Economics Department, providing a comprehensive overview of developments and drivers of investment and its financing in the European Union. It combines an analysis and understanding of key market trends and developments with a more in-depth thematic focus, which this year is devoted to European progress towards a smart and green future in a post-COVID-19 world. The report draws extensively on the results of the annual EIB Investment Survey (EIBIS) and the EIB Municipality Survey.

It complements internal EIB analysis with contributions from leading experts in the field.

About the Economics Department of the EIB

The mission of the EIB Economics Department is to provide economic analyses and studies to support the Bank in its operations and in the definition of its positioning, strategy and policy. The Department, a team of 40 economists, is headed by Debora Revoltella, EIB Chief Economist. Find out more about the EIB's research [here](#).

ESMA updates Guidelines on written agreements between CCP college members

The revised Guidelines take into account changes to composition, functioning and management of CCP colleges which were introduced by amendments to the regulatory technical standards (RTS) on CCP colleges, and by EMIR 2.2.

The objective of the Guidelines is to ensure common, uniform and consistent application of the RTS on CCP colleges and Articles 18 and 19 of EMIR. The Guidelines specifically aim at establishing a standard written agreement to support the smooth functioning of a CCP college.

Next steps

The Guidelines will be translated into the official EU languages and published on ESMA's website. The publication of the translations in all official languages of the EU will trigger a two-month period during which NCAs must notify ESMA whether they already comply or intend to comply with the Guidelines.

Press release – Additional and more flexible funding to help those most in need



With 649 votes in favour, 7 against and 31 abstentions, Parliament approved the agreement to adapt the FEAD regulation that was reached with the member states in December last year.

The adapted regulation allows member states to continue to use the additional funds made available for post-COVID-19 recovery under the [REACT-EU initiative](#) in 2021 and 2022. Member states can choose to increase the resources provided in the FEAD regulation for food aid and other basic assistance for those most in need. In order to alleviate the current burden on public budgets, the additional resources will not be co-financed by member states and the Commission will provide pre-financing to further expedite delivery.

“This pandemic has had far-reaching consequences on people’s quality of life, especially on those who were vulnerable to begin with. More than 20% of all Europeans have seen their situation deteriorate. This fund will be the instrument to support them in finding their way out of poverty and back into society”, says rapporteur [Lucia Ďuriš Nicholsonová](#) on the agreement.

Next steps

The Council must also approve the text formally. Once it has done so, the adopted measures will enter into force after publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

Background

The 3.8 billion EUR Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) was [introduced](#) in 2014 as an EU action to alleviate the worst forms of poverty and foster social cohesion in Europe. Around 13 million people benefit from the Fund each year, including approximately four million children. The COVID-19 pandemic and its economic consequences have exacerbated the situation of more than 20% of the EU population who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, deepened social divisions, and increased job losses, unemployment rates and inequalities.