

**Can a
European
housing
agenda be the
key to liveable,
sustainable,
and just cities?**

Who are we?

International Federation for Housing and Planning (IFHP)

www.ifhp.org

IFHP is a global NGO which unites leading, international thinkers and doers in the area of housing and planning. IFHP was founded in the UK in 1913, originating from the Garden City Movement and its strong belief in creating human settlements offering people a decent housing & home and a worthy place to live.

Deltametropolis Association (VDM)

www.deltametropool.nl

VDM coordinates independent design research on issues relating to the growing metropolitan areas in the Netherlands and the Eurodeltametropolis, addressing the global and European agendas. We explore opportunities and challenges surrounding current tasks with a metropolitan, interregional, national or international character.

Reach us at:

email:

a.sarkar@ifhp.org

p.gerretsen@ifhp.org

eva.kuiper@deltametropool.nl

phone: +31 (0)10 737 0340

location:

Museumpark 25

3015 CB Rotterdam

Postbus 600

3000 AP Rotterdam

Contributions from:

1	Abdi Mehvar	35	Geert Slabbekoorn	69	Miguel vanZevenbergen
2	Abhijeet Chandel	36	Gewa Gieseler	70	Mila Giovacchini
3	Alankrita Sarkar	37	Gudrun Bosch	71	Monique Steijvers - van der Veer
4	Alfredo Corbalan	38	Guy Vloebergh	72	Neli Georgieva
5	Anne-Jo Visser	39	Hadi ElHage	73	Paul Gerretsen
6	Annemijn Oskam	40	Heikki Hirvonen	74	Paulius Kliuininkas
7	Barot Somesh	41	Henk Bouwman	75	Pizarro Kumpf
8	Bas Meijs	42	Henriette Rombouts	76	Regitze Marianne Hess
9	Bea deDiego	43	Hiddo Born	77	Reimar von Meding
10	Benjamin Cadranel	44	iris Thewessen	78	Rene Hogenboom
11	Benjamin Preis	45	Jan Jaap Veldhuis	79	Rene Meyboom
12	Brook Haileselassie	46	Javier San Mill'n Tejedor	80	Robert Temel
13	Caroline Newton	47	Jonas Guignonat	81	Sahar Asodollahi
14	Celine Janssen	48	Jonas K_rsch	82	Sander Aelboet
15	Charlotte Meulenbelt	49	Julie Mabilde	83	Sandrine De Meyer
16	Chioza Marzzavella	50	Jurian Voets	84	Shimona Malaihollo
17	Claudia Iovita	51	Kees Verschoor	85	Sjors Gillissen
18	Claudio Acioly Jr	52	Klaus-Peter Hillebrand	86	Sofie Troch
19	Corina Pitic	53	Kristian Koreman	87	Sorcha Edwards
20	Daniel Bremmer	54	Kushal Shah	88	Stan van de Berg
21	Daniele Zurigo	55	Leen Verbeek	89	Tatiana Marquez Uriarte
22	Darinka Czischke	56	Liza Deleon	90	Tayfun Cinar
23	Ekinsu Tuncer	57	Lorena Borges Dias	91	Tim Heijkoop
24	Eline S' Gravemade	58	Lucia Caudet	92	Tom Daamen
25	Emiliano Rocchetti	59	Maite Arrondo Segovia	93	Vera Manouilov
26	Erik Pasveer	60	Marie Deketelaere-Hanna	94	Wilbert Koppers
27	Esther Agricola	61	Marieke Kuijer	95	Yelizaveta Nemyvaka
28	Eva Kuiper	62	Marja Elsinga	96	Yves van de Castele
29	Floor Schoepel	63	Markus Appenzeller		
30	Floris Schiferli	64	Martijn Eskinasi		
31	Frank Dhondt	65	Martijn Kniestedt		
32	Frank Dirks	66	Matthijs Koch		
33	Frank Reniers	67	Maurits Schaafsma		
34	Gary Klassen	68	Mees Tesselaa Ferrari		



Organisers and experts of Brussels Convening — 15 April 2025



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Our Plea

These propositions are drawn from a series of convenings bringing together experts, practitioners, policymakers, and residents from across Europe. They reflect shared concerns and collective ambition. Across Europe, rising costs, displacement, and inadequate housing supply threaten social inclusion, cohesion, and decent living. These 16 points are our collective response.

The International Federation for Housing and Planning (IFHP) is a global network of housing and planning professionals, rooted in the belief that every person deserves a decent home and a worthy place to live. We bring these propositions forward in direct response to the European Affordable Housing Plan. Integrated housing and planning, at every scale, is the only path forward.

"A liveable Europe demands coordinated EU action, ...

1



Treat Housing as a system

Housing is part of a larger system, which is precisely why it is an EU priority. Housing policy must integrate with spatial planning, mobility, labour, health, and sustainability. Fragmentation has failed us. We must now align instruments, institutions, and investments around shared territorial and social outcomes.

2



European lens on housing challenges

Rural depopulation, rapid urbanisation, and housing market tensions are not isolated national issues, they are transboundary phenomena. Migration, labour dynamics, and investment flows cross borders and demand coordinated EU-level strategies.

3



Housing as the engine of EU ambition

The European Affordable Housing Plan must not stand alone. It must align with the Draghi report, the Competitiveness Compass, and EU goals on climate, mobility, and public health. Good housing and urban planning is a precondition for productivity, innovation, and a just green transition.

4



Infrastructure as a Structural Housing Bottleneck

Energy grid congestion has emerged as an unexpected barrier to housing delivery. In the Netherlands, new housing connections are blocked by grid capacity alone. The EU must recognise energy infrastructure as a housing issue and coordinate grid investments with national and regional housing plans.

financial transparency, and ...

5



Multilevel Governance: Complementary Responsibilities

The EU harmonises, setting shared standards for building regulations and financial instruments. Member States implement, translating frameworks into national policy. Cities and regions deliver, where needs are most acute and solutions most tangible. Not a hierarchy, but a complementary chain of responsibility. It only works when all three levels are empowered to play their part.

6



Confront the crisis of spatial mismatch

Too often, people are pushed far from where opportunities exist. This is not just a housing shortage, it is a failure to put the right homes in the right places. Match housing policy with spatial, mobility, and economic strategies. Plan for equity, not just quantity.

7



Plan the city, not just the building

Shift the emphasis from isolated projects to integrated, long-term planning frameworks. Restore the role of planning as a democratic and creative act, one that shapes not only where we live, but how we live together. Support local authorities in reclaiming long-term planning capacity, especially in underserved territories.

8



Fix what we have first

Europe's greatest potential lies in its existing neighbourhoods. We don't have a shortage of square metres, we have a distribution problem. Unlock the value of what is already built through retrofitting, densification, and circular construction. Reuse is not a fallback; it is innovation.

empowered local governments, ...

9



New money must mean new money

There are serious doubts about whether the 'new money' in the European Affordable Housing Plan is genuinely additional or simply relabelled cohesion funds. This is a matter of political credibility. The European Commission must provide clear, verifiable accounting that distinguishes new resources from reallocated ones, backed by independent monitoring.

10



EU regulatory tools for short-term rentals

Short-term rental platforms are hollowing out housing availability across European cities. The EU must introduce binding regulations, transparency requirements, market-linked caps, and the power for local authorities to apply stricter controls where housing stress is severe.

11



Open dialogue on public instruments

EU funds must benefit those building for the common good. Introduce social conditionalities to guard against financialisation. Establish mechanisms to retain capital within the housing system, ensuring returns are reinvested into affordability and resilience, not extracted for private gain.

12



When EU rules become housing barriers

The ATAD directive is costing Dutch housing associations over €400 million per year in lost investment capacity, an unintended consequence of tax law. EU must systematically audit regulation for negative impacts on social and affordable housing, and introduce corrective mechanisms where harm is identified.

.... residents leading the way, starting now."

13



Housing is culture, not just construction

When we build living environments, we are not just constructing physical spaces but shaping societies and building for communities. Housing is cultural infrastructure. It reflects who we are, how we relate to one another, and the values we choose to uphold.

14



Put residents at the centre

Involve tenants, residents, and local actors in designing and evaluating housing strategies. Participation is the foundation of legitimacy and justice. With the right tools and resources, communities can collectively drive systemic change.

9



Mechanisms for procedural feedback and learning

Cities and regions must be supported through transparent, iterative processes of reflection and adaptation. This means clear procedural guidance from higher governance levels, peer exchange among territories, and the capacity for local actors to learn and improve in real time.

16



Reconnect the networks

We must build a platform where planners talk with designers, where tenants speak alongside developers, where Brussels learns from Bilbao, and Amsterdam learns from Zagreb. Europe must not only legislate but facilitate dialogue, exchange, and experimentation.