



## Build Better Lives Open Call to the new Energy & Housing Commissioner

**We - Europe's civil society- social, health and environmental NGOs, local authorities, trade unions and youth movements - urge EU policy makers to take immediate action on the intersecting crises of the lack of affordable housing, rising energy costs and climate change.**

The creation of a new EU portfolio covering the energy and housing sectors offers a **unique chance to advance an ambitious and just transition in the built environment that can unleash multiple benefits for the energy system, the environment and people.** Our buildings are responsible for up to 40% of the EU's total energy consumption, and 75% of them are inefficient. This means that most people in the EU live in costly and uncomfortable housing. Making our housing **energy efficient and renewable-based** can help reduce our dependence on harmful, expensive and unreliable fossil fuels, boosting the EU's energy security and shielding people from energy poverty by driving down energy bills (thus lowering households' cost of living). This shift will also improve thermal comfort all year long, protect and improve households' health, while combating the climate crisis.

The ultimate objective is to alleviate the ongoing housing crisis and deliver more decent, affordable and energy efficient homes for all.

**To ensure this becomes reality, we call the new EU Commissioner on Energy & Housing to:**

### **SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EPBD**

- The EU Buildings Directive must be transposed and implemented at national level in the most ambitious and socially just way possible. The Commission must monitor and support efforts at national level in order to ensure EU Member States achieve national energy savings goals for homes. In doing so, **prioritising worst performing buildings will be of crucial importance.** The roll-out of new regulatory tools (such as Minimum Energy Performance Standards) and other renovation programmes and initiatives **will always need to be coupled with financing, technical assistance and social safeguards** to ultimately fight energy poverty, improve citizens' participation in the energy transition and triple the current annual (deep) renovation rates. This approach will need to be maintained and reinforced by future initiatives, such as the announced 'Citizens Energy Package' and the 'European Affordable Housing Plan'.



- Social safeguards will need to be designed at national, and especially at local level, to ensure that the upcoming Renovation Wave actually targets and eradicates energy poverty. Social safeguards will need to be implemented together with measures to alleviate the ongoing housing crisis and must protect tenants and vulnerable owner-occupiers, to ultimately secure housing accessibility for all. They should ensure a mix of different dwelling types (especially multi-apartment buildings) are taken into account when designing renovation programmes.
- Policies at both EU and national level must prioritise holistic and integrated deep renovations of buildings, that lower households' energy cost and integrate buildings into a broader EU energy system. Improving energy efficiency via insulation, coupled with the uptake of renewable heating solutions, which is supported by redirecting fossil fuel subsidies towards these objectives, will lead to significant energy savings and emission reductions. Energy efficient buildings can play a more active role in the energy system, by reducing the need for investment, while making it easier to achieve energy security.

## GEAR UP THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN WITH ADEQUATE AND WELL-TARGETED FINANCING

- An adequate enabling framework must be established at EU level to ultimately support the roll-out of climate action on buildings at national level. In view of the existing investment gap needed to decarbonise our building stock, Cohesion Funds must be better used and channelled towards building decarbonisation purposes, and ultimately increased within the context of the future Multiannual financial framework. This will support the needed upscaling of (deep) renovation rates and environmentally sound construction activities dedicated to affordable housing, which needs to meet the EU housing needs. Better earmarking of funding (especially at national level) means prioritising the most vulnerable segments of society and the worst-performing buildings. National policy makers will need to take into account both economic and non-economic dimensions (i.e. race, age and gender etc.) when designing financial schemes for renovations and technical assistance.
- Ensuring that **Social Climate Fund (SCF)** prioritises those segments of the society most impacted by the establishment of the new Emissions Trading Systems (EU ETS-2), covering GHG emissions from buildings and road transport. In order to multiply the several benefits resulting from energy renovation for the society at large, innovative ways to use EU ETS-2 revenues and other EU funding streams to support both broader energy renovation programmes and the needed uptake of renewable heating solutions should be more strongly promoted to and leveraged by Member States.



## ENSURE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, SUPPORT MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE AND ACTIVATION OF THE LOCAL LEVEL

- Activating and supporting national, regional and local actors to become the frontrunners of the transition of our built environment. Good planning at national level, which maximises immediate gains, will be crucial to ensure that a clear Paris-Agreement Compatible roadmap is established for our buildings. The drafting process of the **National Building Renovation Plans** should serve as an opportunity to address challenges, and leverage opportunities that come with the implementation of the EPBD and beyond. The latter can support the optimisation of urban realities and deliver climate resilient and inclusive communities. Within this context, strengthening the role of public authorities, via technical assistance and capacity building activities (especially at local level), and the establishment of one-stop shops to support households' renovation projects, can ensure the roll out of a fair and inclusive transition in the built environment.
- Furthermore, it's crucial to ensure sufficient administrative capacities via technical assistance for the regional and local levels—without a sufficient number of capable personnel to efficiently channel funds and implement initiatives, progress will inevitably lag behind. Good long-term planning also means preparing the construction workforce in time to meet the need for more renovations. Ensuring creation of sufficient direct jobs with decent working conditions, skilling and upskilling of construction workers, and more protection and inclusivity linked to green jobs will be of paramount importance in this regard. The involvement and input of trade unions, along with other social actors and civil society organisations in all planning activities, will be essential to ensure that the social potential of the transition of the built environment will be maximised.

Europe's households and our climate can no longer wait. The new Energy and Housing Commissioner and all policy makers, supported by civil society, need to put in motion an enabling framework that prioritises the provision of affordable, energy efficient homes for all. Repurposing and renovating vacant spaces, insulating the leakiest buildings, phasing out fossil fuels in favour of renewable heating and cooling, will require significant financial support, technical aid and strong social protection. A socially just and ambitious transition of the built environment starts by shaping better buildings today for better lives tomorrow.

