

# Prague Declaration

Adopted in Prague,  
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on the occasion  
of the conference

# Affordable and Quality Housing for All



CZECH  
CHAMBER  
OF  
ARCHITECTS

Europe is confronting a bloc-wide housing crisis, marked by a severe shortage of affordable homes, the declining quality of new builds and the deteriorating state of existing dwellings. Recognising the central role of housing in social cohesion, economic resilience and climate transition, the European Union has made housing a strategic priority. The goal: to build resilient, inclusive and human-centric cities where everyone can access a safe and affordable home.

United by a common vision for a fair and sustainable housing future, the Architects' Council of Europe and Housing Europe are joining forces to turn ambition into action. Together, they call on the European Union to act at national, regional and local levels to adopt the following recommendations and make affordable, sustainable and quality housing a reality for everyone.

## 1

# Housing as a human right and public asset

Housing is more than shelter — it is the bedrock of dignity, health and safety. Europe's existing housing stock carries a strong cultural dimension, reflecting the history, traditions and identities of the communities that created it. Yet for decades, housing has been increasingly treated as a commodity rather than as a public asset. To reverse this trend, public policies must prioritise the common good, placing people and nature at the heart of urban development, while curbing speculation.

To that end, we call on the European Union and Member States to:

- Embed the Right to Adequate Housing (Article 31 of the European Social Charter) at the heart of EU and national housing policies;
- Support community-led, cooperative and social housing models that preserve affordability, diversity and long-term value;
- Foster participatory design and planning processes to ensure inclusion and local ownership in housing projects;
- Develop financial frameworks in public-private cooperation that are tailored to fit housing production and renovation.

## 2

# Renovation first: From demolition to reuse and care

With 38 million vacant homes in Europe and countless underused buildings—particularly office spaces—the greatest opportunity lies not in new construction, but in revitalising what already exists.

Renovating the existing housing stock preserves embodied carbon and offers a chance to adapt our living environments to climate change, while improving the livability of homes and neighborhoods. To maximise these benefits, renovation should be undertaken at the district scale, integrating housing upgrades with improvements to social infrastructure, public spaces, and renewable energy systems.

To that end, we call on the European Union and Member States to:

- Introduce VAT reductions or exemptions for sustainable renovation and adaptive reuse projects;
- Redirect public and private funding toward district renovation and reuse of vacant buildings;
- Promote the potential of building extensions and urban densification within existing areas and structures;
- Implement fast-track procedures for adaptive reuse projects within master planning and building permitting processes.

## 3

# Quality by Design: Housing that enhances well-being

Affordable housing must not compromise on quality. Short-term savings achieved through design compromise ultimately lead to higher long-term costs in maintenance, energy use, health and social cohesion. Relaxing design standards to meet short-term delivery targets risks repeating past mistakes, producing housing that is neither resilient nor socially sustainable. Well-designed homes are healthy, adaptable and culturally resonant, fostering well-being and community life. Design quality is an investment, not a luxury.

To that end, we call on the European Union and Member States to:

- Make design quality a core criterion in public procurement and funding, replacing lowest-cost selection with life-cycle and social value assessment;
- Develop EU-wide quality benchmarks for housing, drawing on the Davos Baukultur Quality System or New European Bauhaus principles;
- Encourage design solutions that allow housing to be resized and reconfigured in response to demographic changes and evolving lifestyles (“rightsizing”);
- Consider the need for proximity to everyday amenities, including those for education, health, culture, sport, leisure and access to nature.

# Innovation and digitalisation: Tools for scalable, sustainable housing

Digitalisation across the construction value chain is essential to delivering affordable, high-quality housing. Digital tools can enable us to design, test and manage projects more efficiently, optimise energy performance, reduce construction costs over life cycle, facilitate design for disassembly (DfD) and enhance long-term durability.

Off-site construction shall be recognised as a vital strategy for accelerating housing delivery, controlling waste and costs and elevating construction quality. Component-based approaches are to be prioritised as the foundation of innovation and adaptability, while serial, mass-produced models that generate uniform and decontextualised outcomes must be rejected. Architects hold a central responsibility to lead this transformation — ensuring that off-site manufacturing upholds design excellence, cultural relevance and meaningful urban integration.

We call on the European Union and Member States to:

- Promote lifecycle data integration across the construction value chain for both new builds and renovations to improve efficiency, sustainability and cost-effectiveness;
- When considering off-site construction, commit to component-based design — adaptable, intelligent and responsive to context — while rejecting the sterile repetition of mass-produced models that erase character and place;
- Fund research and demonstration projects that link digital innovation, off-site methods, and circular economy principles to scalable, sustainable housing solutions.

# Call to Action

In the face of the housing crisis, we demand bold, decisive action to tackle its root causes: soaring construction costs, burdensome regulation and chronic underinvestment. Quality must stand equal to affordability. We must learn from past failures and build upon the proven successes already achieved across Europe.

We are ready — fully committed — to support the European Union, Member States and cities in transforming these principles into concrete, measurable action.

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**Carl Bäckstrand**  
ACE President

The Architect's Council of Europe is the representative organisation for architecture at European level. Its membership currently consists of 52 Member Organisations, including the regulatory and professional representative bodies in all EU Member States, 6 Observers Members (Serbia, Kosovo, Ukraine, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia and Moldova) from the Accession Countries plus Members with special status (UK, Switzerland and Norway), thereby representing the interests of over half a million architects from 36 countries in Europe.  
[www.ace-cae.eu](http://www.ace-cae.eu)

**Jan Kasl**  
CCA President

The Czech Chamber of Architects (CCA) is a self-governing professional organization representing architects, urban planners, and landscape architects in the Czech Republic. Established by Act No. 360/1992 Coll., the Chamber safeguards professional and ethical standards, protects the public interest in construction, and promotes the quality of the built environment. Through architectural competitions, education, and advocacy, the CCA supports sustainable, innovative, and socially responsible architecture while fostering a culture of excellence across the profession.  
[www.cka.cz](http://www.cka.cz)

**Marco Corradi**  
Housing Europe President

Housing Europe, the European Federation of Public, Cooperative, and Social Housing, has been the voice of this sector since 1988. Representing 44 national and regional federations and 16 partner organisations across 31 countries, Housing Europe oversees around 25 million homes, accounting for approximately 11% of Europe's housing stock. Through a network of over 43,000 local housing organisations, Housing Europe is the point of reference for stable housing models, innovation, and research.  
[www.housingeurope.eu](http://www.housingeurope.eu)

