News | 23.04.2013

Social Housing in the EU

A lever to help the EU out of the economic, social and environmental crisis

The social housing sector can be used as a lever to help the EU out of the economic, social and environmental crisis, according to Green MEP Karima Delli. Her report on social housing in the EU was endorsed Tuesday afternoon by the European Parliament's Employment and Social Affairs committee, adding momentum to calls for Commission action in this area.

Despite the existence of social housing in many EU Member States, many people can no longer afford access to decent housing. In 2010, 5.7% of the European population suffered from homelessness. In addition, 17.86% lived in overcrowded or unfit housing and 10.10% of households faced excess housing costs of more than 40% of their disposable income.

With soaring rents and energy prices, social housing subsidies are under pressure while at the same time, the debt crisis is pushing states to make sacrifices in social spending, even reducing social housing at the expense of social and territorial cohesion.

Investment in social housing is also a means of responding to population ageing and dependency among elderly people, to the specific needs of young people and to the need to include marginalised communities and the homeless.

On the economic front, investing in social housing means boosting construction, which has been hard hit by the crisis, as well as renovation, particularly the heat efficiency and renewable energy sectors – high-return industries with the capacity to generate green jobs that are local and cannot be ‘off-shored’.

Next to transport, housing is the sector with the greatest potential for making savings. Social housing can thus contribute to meeting the climate targets in the Europe 2020 strategy, thereby addressing environmental imperatives and at the same time reducing household energy bills as well as energy dependency.

Having a sufficient supply of social housing helps to smooth out the cyclical nature of the property market and to lessen the impact of phenomena such as property bubbles, which destabilise economies. The Union’s macro-economic and budgetary surveillance system needs to take greater account of investment in social housing.

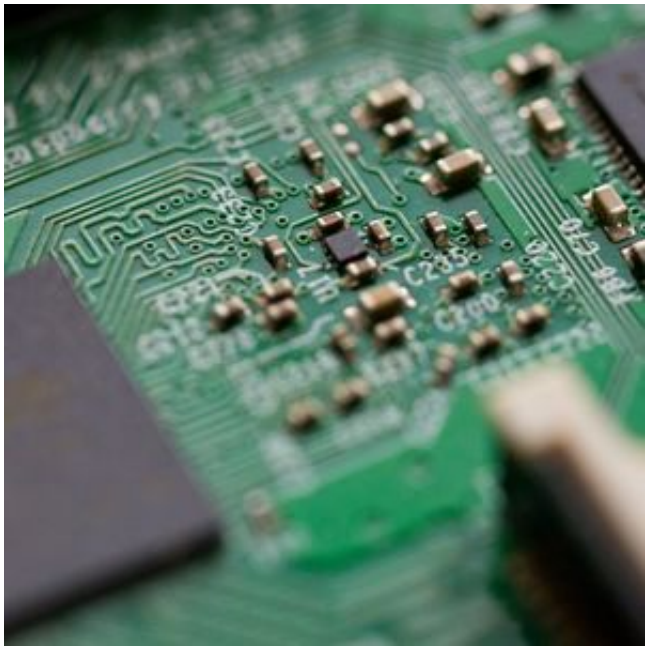
Social housing can be a effective public response to the failure of the housing market to meet all housing

needs and to ensure that everyone has access to a affordable housing. It's time for the EU to grasp this low hanging fruit.

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Responsible MEPs



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