

ORDINARY SESSSION 2020-2021
17 JULY 2021

**PARLIAMENT OF THE
BRUSSELS-CAPITAL REGION**

RECOMMENDATIONS

of the deliberative committee responsible for making recommendations for lasting solutions to the situation of homeless and inadequately housed people in the Brussels-Capital Region.

See:

Parliament Documents:
B-86/1 – 2020/2021: Report.

In accordance with [the vade mecum for deliberative committees](#), 'A distinction is made between recommendations based on the level of support they receive from those taking part in the deliberative committee. Each recommendation that receives an 80% majority is therefore specifically pinpointed. Recommendations obtaining broad consensus are consequently given impetus.' . The 60 recommendations concerned are marked with an asterisk.*

The deliberative committee responsible for making recommendations for lasting solutions to the situation of homeless and inadequately housed people in the Brussels-Capital Region recommends as follows:

HOUSING

**Recommendation 1*

to increase the contribution paid to social housing agencies to enable them to increase the number of housing units and serve more citizens, and to guarantee a fair rent for landlords, preventing social housing agencies from becoming the subject of excessive speculation on the part of private investors;

Recommendation 2

to guarantee that landlords make housing units available to a social housing agency for a fixed period of time if those housing units were constructed with the benefit of reduced taxes;

**Recommendation 3*

to promote the use of social housing agencies to expedite the provision of private-sector social housing;

Recommendation 4

to ensure that owners of more than one property contribute in proportion to their income from property;

to allocate this contribution exclusively to the Alliance Habitat Housing Programme and Regional Housing Plan;

**Recommendation 5*

to encourage the competent local and regional authorities to make it easier to authorize or, in the case of temporary occupancy, grant exemption from, change of use permits for converting offices into housing;

**Recommendation 6*

to create more safe hostels able to accommodate any vulnerable person in an emergency situation; these hostels will offer single, secure rooms accessible day and night, and residents could, for example, do work at the hostel to pay their rent;

to enable residents to take training courses in a permanent living environment, in collaboration with the Actiris (the Brussels employment office), Forem (the Walloon Vocational Training and Employment Office) and VDAB (Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Office) employment services;

**Recommendation 7*

to help households whose income is just above the welfare payment thresholds (i.e., the lower middle class) to assert their entitlements to support (entitlement to support from CPAS social support centres, etc.);

Recommendation 8

to regulate the rental market through rent control, with a rent scale established on the basis of objective criteria (energy consumption, surface area, number of rooms, location and condition of the property, etc.), with effective compliance monitoring;

**Recommendation 9*

to establish an effective monitoring system to prevent discrimination against prospective tenants, such as families with children;

Recommendation 10

the temporary or permanent renovation of empty buildings and offices, including to accommodate the homeless;

to require owners of offices that remain unoccupied to allow the installation of 'woonbox' (modular accommodation) housing concept systems in all unoccupied spaces where there are no technical barriers to doing so;

**Recommendation 11*

to expedite the redevelopment of offices into housing, to include social and similar housing;

**Recommendation 12*

to improve the access of social tenants and young people to property ownership (via *leasing*);

Recommendation 13

to expedite the construction of housing to help reduce the price and cost of property;

Recommendation 14

to tax rents based on the energy performance of buildings (EPC) and make provision for deductions for investments and alterations, for example energy efficiency improvements;

**Recommendation 15*

to strengthen the monitoring of slum landlords and illegal lease agreements and, correspondingly, provide housing for families who need to be rehoused;

**Recommendation 16*

to support people evicted from their housing, ensuring they know their rights;

to ensure that public authorities do everything possible to help that evicted persons to find alternative housing;

where applicable, to make provision for a relocation allowance, financial assistance and social and/or psychological support for evicted persons;

Recommendation 17

to intervene in the management of an unoccupied property: after 6 months, through an empty housing tax that increases over time; then, after 12 months, through a mandatory public management right; where this is the case, the housing must be handed over to a social housing agency and the landlord will receive a proportion of the income, based on a apportionment formula; this mandatory formula could be reviewed once every 12 months;

Recommendation 18

to enhance the mechanism for monitoring and taxing empty housing;

Recommendation 19

to support the security deposit support fund;

**Recommendation 20*

to create a regulatory framework to facilitate the temporary occupancy of vacant property (housing, offices, land and more), allowing for more flexible standards of comfort and health and the expiry of occupancy contracts, with a focus on safety;

Recommendation 21

to increase the density of housing in the outer suburbs of Brussels;

Recommendation 22

to increase the density of housing around public transport hubs;

Recommendation 23

to expand the settling-in allowance for people entitled to social housing forced to rent private housing while waiting to be allocated social housing;

Recommendation 24

to implement the right to temporarily requisition unoccupied buildings for a specific period, and put them into working order to respond to housing challenges;

Recommendation 25

to put in place a policy that encourages investors and property developers to rent a minimum percentage of housing to a social housing agency for 99 years, with the possibility of *leasing* to lift people out of the rental market;

**Recommendation 26*

to increase the supply of social housing through the acquisition and renovation of empty housing stock, such as vacant offices, by the region's authorities;

**Recommendation 27*

to penalise social housing corporations that do not allocate housing in a condition that is suitable for occupancy;

**Recommendation 28*

to use vacant buildings owned by the region's authorities and temporarily convert them into housing for homeless people;

Recommendation 29

to enhance the empowerment policy that turns social housing into a springboard, by offering:

- 1° individual job seeker support;
- 2° social and psychological support to develop self-confidence;

Recommendation 30

to open up access to social housing to undocumented persons, or grant them a residence permit to enable them to benefit from entitlement to social housing;

**Recommendation 31*

to impose a social housing quota on municipal housing projects (blend of public and private housing);

**Recommendation 32*

to give priority on social housing waiting lists to homeless people, victims of domestic violence, large families, etc.;

**Recommendation 33*

in the event of eviction because accommodation is unfit for habitation, grant systematic assistance for immediate rehousing;

Recommendation 34

to require the police to record a tenant's complaint in the event of unlawful eviction;

**Recommendation 35*

to ensure that the rule requiring a minimum of social housing units per municipality is implemented;

**Recommendation 36*

to combat vacant social housing;

Recommendation 37

to establish a specific programme of social housing for the victims of domestic and intra-family violence;

**Recommendation 38*

to create more social housing in municipalities with less than 20% of social housing to make supply consistent throughout the region;

**Recommendation 39*

to regularly renovate public housing and regularly draft an inventory of the public buildings concerned to ensure timely intervention to prevent the housing from becoming unfit for habitation;

**Recommendation 40*

to provide suitable social housing that is adapted to the the social realities and needs (number of people, disability status, single parents, etc.) and how these evolve over time;

Recommendation 41

create a fund to cover rents that would would also cover the costs of rehousing evicted persons;

PREVENTION

Recommendation 42

to strengthen or improve job access and/or retention (for example by expanding the youth employment guarantee to all jobseekers);

Recommendation 43

agree on a trainee income to help with finding and retaining high-quality employment;

Recommendation 44

to boost social inclusion through employment;

Recommendation 45

to review the mechanisms that lead to overindebtedness and poverty and regulate harmful practices that might lead to this (collection charges, lending rates, bailiff fees, direct marketing, consumer credit, etc.);

Recommendation 46

to notify the CPAS, public social welfare centres, as soon as a problem with the non-payment of rent first arises, so that they can take action, help the person concerned and send a social worker to visit the tenant directly;

**Recommendation 47*

to establish a multidisciplinary support case file (training, housing, family, psychological support) for people released from an institution (prison, youth protection institution, etc.) to ensure their reintegration into society;

**Recommendation 48*

to ensure, vis-à-vis the competent authorities, that the rationale for reimbursing mental health treatment costs is equivalent or comparable to that of physical care;

Recommendation 49

to set up facilities to accommodate those aged over 18 until they reach the age of 25, to support them in becoming independent;

**Recommendation 50*

see to it that district judges ensure that the CPAS social welfare centres play a role in dealing with eviction cases;

**Recommendation 51*

to strengthen debt mediation services;

**Recommendation 52*

to harmonise the guidelines for CPAS centres in the Brussels-Capital Region, to ensure that the prevailing regulations are applied without political influence to ensure greater equality;

to review how the CPAS social welfare centres operate in order to boost confidence in their role;

to strengthen the social role of CPAS social welfare centres to extend beyond their administrative tasks, for example by making the services more user friendly;

to entrust to the regional ombudsman the task of mediating with CPAS social welfare centres;

SUPPORT FOR THE SECTOR

**Recommendation 53*

to enable simplified and faster access to mental health facilities for immediate support;

**Recommendation 54*

to support mental health facilities to make them direct intermediaries between social workers and the person experiencing a mental health disorder;

**Recommendation 55*

to strengthen specific gender-related and mental-health training modules for social workers;

**Recommendation 56*

to streamline administrative procedures for associations that provide assistance to homeless people to apply for recognition and approval;

Recommendation 57

to create a nationwide event (in collaboration with other government authorities) to raise funds to support the homelessness sector;

TARGETED SUPPORT

Recommendation 58

to support and provide financial assistance to homeless people who want to pursue their own projects, or who want to develop their skills;

**Recommendation 59*

to streamline and expedite procedures to provide better protection for the victims of violence;

to provide more free facilities (places of trust) that are appropriate for the victims of violence;

**Recommendation 60*

to develop more trusted facilities dedicated to supporting young people suffering from alcohol or other dependency and reintegrating them into society;

**Recommendation 61*

to develop low-threshold, multidisciplinary facilities to target a greater number of homeless people; this support must be combined with access to housing;

**Recommendation 62*

to expand the resources put in place to support victims of domestic violence so that they can find housing as quickly as possible through priority access to social housing;

to step up the fight against domestic violence to prevent women with children finding themselves on the street (by improving how they are treated when they file a complaint, better police training on domestic violence, the development of a support service for female victims of domestic violence at each CPAS social welfare centre, etc.);

**Recommendation 63*

to strengthen entities involved in assisting the reintegration of ex-prisoners;

**Recommendation 64*

to create more solutions for homeless people with a dog or other pet;

**Recommendation 65*

to promote a proactive information framework for support for young people (posters in metro stations, brochures, freephone number, etc.);

to promote more strategies and develop low-threshold assistance and support facilities in each municipality for young homeless people, or young people leaving a youth protection institution (providing facilities for girls and facilities for boys);

to promote coordination between the various specific support facilities for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness;

**Recommendation 66*

to promote support and guidance facilities for elderly homeless people;

to carry out long-term monitoring of their health status;

to provide them with housing;

**Recommendation 67*

improve and expand lockers for the personal belongings of homeless people to be stored while they are accommodated at support facilities;

RIGHTS OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

**Recommendation 68*

to introduce individualised social rights by removing the impact of cohabitation on sums received, for example by recognising house-sharing;

Recommendation 69

to introduce an automatic triggering of social rights;

**Recommendation 70*

to guarantee that basic rights, notably as regards a mailing address, official place of residence, social integration income and social benefits, are applied consistently by all competent services (local, regional and cross-municipal) throughout the Brussels-Capital Region.

**Recommendation 71*

to establish a single, non-stigmatising point of contact for anyone at risk of homelessness, to provide comprehensive information that can be accessed through a range of channels, not just digitally (such as support through a permanent or mobile

social cybercafe);

**Recommendation 72*

to create an advice hub within each municipality to inform people of their rights and to refer them to support and care facilities; increase people's awareness of their rights and the existence of this advice hub;

**Recommendation 73*

to enhance and centralise access to information about social rights via a digital platform, and always ensure there is an equally effective physical alternative;

**Recommendation 74*

to expand the provision of (anonymous) food vouchers to people who are homeless or in precarious situations;

**Recommendation 75*

to facilitate the provision of work permits, for example by reducing case processing times;

Recommendation 76

to ask the competent authorities to introduce a system enabling people without legal residence status sufficient time (for example 6 months) to find work or accommodation without risking deportation, and introduce a maximum case-processing time.

Recommendation 77

to grant a provisional work permit and/or a provisional residence permit to immigrants in precarious situations;

**Recommendation 78*

to shorten the deadline by which CPAS social welfare centres must respond to applications for a mailing address and provide grounds for refusal, and facilitate the provision of such addresses by lowering the criteria to the lowest possible level;

Recommendation 79

in order to simplify arbitration, to adopt a legal framework (national declaration of the rights of homeless people) to serve as a basis for any decision, and to raise public awareness of its existence;

Recommendation 80

to guarantee that any undocumented person arriving on Belgian territory is routinely informed of all their rights through government-funded mechanisms (e.g., an automatic text message when crossing the border giving a freephone information number);

**Recommendation 81*

to establish a general telephone support line connected to associations that support and receive homeless people;

INNOVATIONS AND METHODS OF GUIDANCE

**Recommendation 82*

to step up and extend the continued expansion of *Housing First* projects;

**Recommendation 83*

to provide general guidance for each person, focusing on *Housing First* and on informing them of their rights, and working with them to address any failure to exercising their rights;

**Recommendation 84*

to promote innovative methods for constructing low-cost housing (e.g., housing construction through 3D printing, the repurposing of containers to low-cost housing, etc.);

**Recommendation 85*

to offer further support for homeless people who cannot lead independent lives that is tailored to their personal situation. This support should include both financial tuition (on banking and insurance) and psychological support;

**Recommendation 86*

to establish more half-way houses, for example for people leaving prison;

**Recommendation 87*

to enhance social support for people who see current criteria for accommodation as being too restrictive (because they are users of addictive substances, because they have a pet, etc.), as well as for people in need, and provide them with suitable accommodation (subsidised housing, studio flat, house, etc.);

Recommendation 88

as part of urban development, to allocate a fixed proportion of land to mechanisms such as the *Community Land Trust*, with the aim of lowering housing prices;

Recommendation 89

to request that Actiris (the Brussels employment agency) and the CPAS socio-professional integration services provide tailor-made occupational support for homeless people;

Recommendation 90

to introduce volunteer sponsors managed by professionals to help homeless people find their way in society;

**Recommendation 91*

to develop spaces for homeless people so that they can have a voice, and so that their voice can be heard (with psychosocial support);

Recommendation 92

to find solutions suitable for each person who finds themselves on the street, because there is no problem to which a solution cannot be found, and because a huge range of different problems exist (e.g., accommodating children in foster homes while allowing visits from their parents or legal guardians);

**Recommendation 93*

to increase daytime shelters for homeless people and also open night shelters during the day;

**Recommendation 94*

to initiate a dialogue with Bpost, the Belgian postal service, to launch a project to look at the possibility of a free postbox for homeless people;

**Recommendation 95*

to set up a coordinated team to support *Housing First* and to refer homeless people to this programme;

**Recommendation 96*

to ask the Brussels legal aid office to examine how to reduce the barriers to homeless people accessing effective legal aid without any discrimination;

Recommendation 97

to offer free public transport to homeless people and recipients of social support across Brussels and its outskirts, or, for that matter, throughout Belgium.

The President,

Ibrahim Dönmez