UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE HOUSING EUROPE

#Housing2030

Effective policies for affordable housing in the UNECE region





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Geneva, 2021

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This publication is issued in English and Russian.

ECE/HBP/204

UNITED NATIONS PUBLICATION
Sales No. E.21.II.E.4
ISBN: 978-92-1-117267-6
eISBN: 978-92-1-403048-5

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United Nations publication issued by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

FOREWORD

At least 100 million low and middle-income people in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region are housing cost overburdened; they spend more than 40 per cent of their disposable income on housing. Housing affordability is an important element of the right to adequate housing but is often a challenge for groups of the population facing vulnerabilities. These include young people, senior citizens, large families with children, and people who suffer from limited access to healthcare, fuel poverty, and price inflation of essential goods and services. Housing affordability remains a major challenge also for middle-income earners, especially in many large cities where rents are skyrocketing, and the quality of available housing is often low.

Rapid and unplanned urbanization and urban sprawl, climate change, financialization of the housing sector, the lack of consideration for an ageing population and migration are among the factors which further exacerbate the problem of access to affordable and decent housing and push even the most robust national housing systems to their limits.

The health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, when the most fundamental health advice from governments has been "stay at home", has greatly amplified the challenges of the lack of access to affordable adequate and healthy housing for all.

Addressing the housing affordability challenge is central to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 1 on poverty eradication and 11 on inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements. A commitment to housing for all is also a transformative force that can contribute to the world overcoming challenges related to climate change, exclusion and inequality. There is an urgent need to understand how countries and cities can achieve more affordable housing – through their policies and practices.

This publication - #Housing2030: Effective policies for affordable housing in the UNECE region – explores housing affordability challenges and existing policy instruments for improving housing affordability in the UNECE region; it facilitates the exchange and dissemination of good practices in improving housing affordability among countries and cities of the region. The study addresses the following four topics: (1) housing governance and regulation; (2) access to finance and funding; (3) access and availability of land for housing construction; and (4) climate-neutral housing construction and renovation.

The study supports the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda, the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing and other relevant international commitments. The study builds upon the four principles of sustainable housing, as outlined in the Geneva UN Charter: (a) environmental protection; (b) economic effectiveness; (c) social inclusion and participation; and (d) cultural adequacy.

It was developed within #Housing2030, a joint international initiative of UNECE, UN-Habitat and Housing Europe which brings together representatives of governments and housing experts from 56 member States in the UNECE region and 43,000 affordable housing providers and neighbourhood developers represented by Housing Europe.

The experience of the implementation of the #Housing2030 initiative demonstrated the great value of cooperation not only between the Initiative partners but also of experts and policymakers who contributed to the study.

We are committed to continue the cooperation within the #Housing2030 initiative and we hope to be able to support governments and experts with policy advice and capacity-building following the launch of this publication.

We hope that this publication will become a valuable resource for national, local governments and experts in developing their policies and programmes to promote access to affordable, adequate and healthy housing for all and that it will inspire housing experts to continue both further research on and practical implementation of innovative policies and tools to support access to affordable, adequate housing for all.

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