



The strong and united voice of universities
of science and technology in Europe

European Affordable Housing Plan – housing Europe's talent

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CESAER, the strong and united voice of over 50 leading universities of science and technology in Europe, welcomes the European Commission's initiative to develop a European Affordable Housing Plan. We emphasise that affordable housing is not only a social necessity but also an essential enabler of excellence in education, research, and innovation, and thereby of Europe's talent strategies and the Union of Skills.

Our Members consistently report severe shortages of affordable housing for students, researchers, and professional and academic staff. These challenges are widespread across Europe and particularly acute in university cities. In technical and scientific disciplines, in-person presence is indispensable given the centrality of laboratory work and experimental teaching. More broadly, students, researchers, academics, and future innovators must be able to engage in person to collaborate, exchange ideas, and build connections — all of which lie at the heart of Europe's excellence in education, research, and innovation. High housing costs can hinder international mobility, which is essential for attracting and retaining talent and for supporting researchers' career development, including for non-natives facing rental market barriers such as long waiting lists.

Lack of affordable housing may entail social consequences for university communities. For some individuals, the decision to pursue an academic career may come at the expense of starting a family, as the high cost and limited availability of suitable housing can make it financially and practically unfeasible to accommodate children. Furthermore, expensive housing exacerbates social inequality in access to education and research careers, favouring those with financial support from family, proximity to universities, or a partner to share living expenses.

Addressing the housing crisis is therefore not only a societal imperative, as recognised in the European Parliament's 2021 resolution on access to decent and affordable housing for all, and underlined by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in a speech on 10 September 2025, who stressed that housing is a social right in Europe. It is also a prerequisite for attracting and retaining talent, achieving the EU's graduate mobility

targets, and fulfilling the ambitions of the European Education Area and European Research Area, including the realisation of the [‘fifth freedom’](#).

- We strongly support EU-level action to address housing challenges for students, researchers, and professional and academic staff, and call on the EU institutions to integrate action along three dimensions: integrate housing into talent strategies; build on evidence and existing initiatives; and foster cooperation across levels.

1. Integrate housing into talent strategies

Housing for students, researchers, and professional and academic staff must be a core pillar of the European Affordable Housing Plan. Affordable housing is essential to strengthen graduate mobility through Erasmus+ and the European Universities Alliances, to support research careers, and to attract and retain global talent.

Our report [‘Research careers: A critical choice for Europe’](#) (2024) highlights that flagship programmes such as the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) and European Research Council (ERC) have laid important foundations for mobility and excellence but require substantial expansion. Building on this, we underline that their success also depends on accessible and affordable housing in Europe’s university cities — a crucial condition for Europe to remain attractive as a destination for both European and non-European talents and their families.

2. Build on evidence and existing initiatives

EU action should draw from the rich set of practices and research already emerging across member states and our universities, including, for example:

- Reusing of existing buildings with energy-efficient renovations to swiftly increase the number of affordable, sustainable, and decent homes for university communities.
- Ensuring essential services for Erasmus+ mobility, such as the availability of affordable short-term accommodation in small and large university cities across Europe and related housing quality standards, and promoting measures enabling students to sublet their regular accommodation during mobility periods, while enhancing the development of student housing quality labels and digital data standards (as in the [HOME² project](#)).
- Incentivising creative and forward-looking models such as co-housing, including intergenerational housing models, and promoting innovative construction methods such as modular and 3D-printed housing.
- Supporting and funding the development of public and non-profit student housing across Europe. This is critical for ensuring equitable access to education, supporting academic careers, and underpinning the professional growth and mobility of the younger generation to the benefit of regional, national, and European development.

3. Foster cooperation across levels

Effective solutions will require coordination between European institutions, member states, regions, cities, universities, and housing providers. A dedicated EU platform, a permanent task force, and an advisory board for dialogue and monitoring could help align funding, share good practices, and ensure measurable results, impact, and accountability. Such advisory structures should include diverse expertise and stakeholder representation, including universities of science and technology and academic experts in housing, urban development, and social inclusion, to ensure evidence-based policy and practical relevance.

Our offer

CESAER and its Members stand ready to support the European Affordable Housing Plan by sharing insights, data, and innovative solutions from our universities of science and technology. We call on the EU institutions to make affordable housing a key pillar of Europe's talent strategy, ensuring that students, early-career and established researchers, and academic staff can access affordable housing that supports their learning, teaching, and research, and strengthens Europe's capacity to attract, retain, and develop talent.

For more information and enquiries, please [contact](#) our Advisor for Benchmark & Higher Education, Touko Närhi.

Rooted in advanced engineering education and research, CESAER is an international association of leading specialised and comprehensive universities with a strong science and technology profile that advocate, learn from each other and inspire debates. Our Members champion excellence in higher education, training, research, and innovation, contribute to knowledge societies for a sustainable future and deliver significant scientific, economic, social, and societal impact. To support its advocacy efforts, CESAER Members produce many publications such as white papers and positions, to be found on cesaer.org

