

Call for evidence: Affordable Housing Act

EDF input to the Commission consultation

Deadline: 3 April 2026

There is a housing crisis in the EU. This is a huge challenge for many, but persons with disabilities are even more affected by the rising prices and insecurity.

Unfortunately, this is not new. Not only are [11% of persons with disabilities in the EU being overburdened by the cost of their housing](#), but only [28.9% of persons with disabilities consider that their dwelling actually meets their needs](#). That means that two-thirds of persons with disabilities in the EU live in inadequate dwellings – mainly due to the lack of accessible housing available.

This effectively leaves many persons with disabilities and older persons trapped in their own homes and in some cases, persons with disabilities are even re-institutionalised and robbed of their independence because accessible housing is unavailable. In one testimony that we received, a young woman from Spain, who is a wheelchair user, stated that she had to live without access to a bathroom for more than 2 years when she moved to Brussels. There were no accessible apartments available that she could afford with her trainee salary. She could not wash properly and developed skin problems and her mental health also suffered from this situation.

And even if it is available, accessible housing often comes at an extra cost. This extra cost exacerbates the already persistent issue of increased poverty and social exclusion of persons with disabilities: 28.8% of persons with disabilities in the EU are currently at risk of poverty and social exclusion and [15.1% are unable to keep their homes adequately warm in winter](#). That is why we recently adopted a [resolution](#) calling on EU decision-makers to take these circumstances into account when developing the Affordable Housing Act.

Building more accessible housing and improving accessibility when renovating is the key to alleviating the housing crisis for persons with disabilities. For this, we need more concrete policies and legislation from the EU so that Member States are obliged to apply harmonised accessibility requirements for buildings.

A first step in the right direction was taken with the adoption of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive last year, which includes some important provisions that could improve accessibility. There is also already a European Standard on accessibility and usability of the built environment (EN 17210) which should be promoted and referenced in binding EU legislation. Furthermore, the European Accessibility Act (Directive 882/2019) contains voluntary provisions on accessibility of the built environment that should be made mandatory.

It is also worth noting, that if accessibility is taken into account from the beginning of a construction project, it is not expensive. A [2004 study of the Technical University of Zürich](#) showed that the cost of making a new building accessible from its outset only costs on average 1.8 % of the entire construction cost. This is even lower for bigger

projects costing more than 5 Million Swiss Francs, where the additional cost for accessibility is as low as 0.5 % of the entire construction cost. This was also confirmed in a [2017 study of the German Council of Cities and Municipalities](#).

But most importantly, accessible and affordable housing is not a luxury. Living in adequate housing is also a right according to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities.