

Speech at the meeting of coordinators of the ITRE and CULT Committees in the European Parliament on the Commission's initiative "New European Bauhaus" (Wednesday 14 April 2021)

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We need to reflect on what role housing plays in a century marked by the greatest scientific, technical, social and economic transformations that may have ever occurred. What role does housing policy play in the city of the future?

Well, in the words of the European Commission, the New European Bauhaus initiative brings the Green Deal to our living spaces and requires a collective effort to imagine and build a future that is sustainable, inclusive and beautiful for our minds and our souls. It continues to state that "Beautiful means inclusive and accessible spaces, Beautiful means sustainable solutions and Beautiful means enriching experiences."

I would like to add that 'beautiful' also means that the right to housing is treated as a fundamental right, and this is not only a political but also an aesthetic and, above all, ethical issue. The lack of decent housing affects health and the environment, while limiting the right to adequate education, professional development and even participation in public life. The consequence of this is a socially, economically and psychologically fragmented city that has been suffering the effects of gentrification and unsustainable tourism for years. The consequence of this is also an aesthetic of decline in our cities, which is clearly contrary to the spirit of the New European Bauhaus. It is clear that the guarantee of the right to housing must be linked to an inclusive, sustainable and democratically managed urban environment or, in other words, to the "right to the city". Treating housing as a commercial object is nothing beautiful, privatising urban spaces and accepting that 700,000 people across Europe sleep in the streets every night is neither beautiful nor ethical.

The report adopted by the European Parliament last January on the access to decent and affordable housing can be a compass and guide as it includes important measures such as the support for a neutral model of housing, measures to support participatory processes in rehabilitation; measures to promote the circular economy in the construction sector; the introduction of green social housing into national housing investment plans, including criteria for social housing sustainability... and a very long etc. And one of the most important proposals: exclusion of housing from competition rules.

This is the future of our cities in Europe. We need to support public and social housing policies, but not only for the most vulnerable people but also for the middle class. The exclusion of housing from the rules of competition is also "beautiful". You cannot create anything beautiful with speculators and vulture funds. It should be the citizens themselves who decide how to transform their cities and, from there, how to transform society as a whole. All this is not only beautiful but, above all, ethical.

Science and technology will shape the future of smart cities, but they will not achieve aesthetic or ethical results if they are not accompanied by a strong social dimension. The New European Bauhaus must help reduce social inequalities in order to be truly sustainable and inclusive. To do this, it must invest first and foremost in the most

disadvantaged neighbourhoods and people. We need the Commission's commitment to that.