



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
Europe Regional Office

Human Rights Talk

Ensuring the right to housing in Europe's green transition

8 March 2024, 11:00-12:30 CET

UN House Brussels, Boulevard du Régent 37-40

The EU Green Deal plays a crucial role in addressing the challenges posed by climate change and environmental risks. With the goal of reaching climate neutrality by 2050, it does this by promoting the uptake of greener technologies, encouraging responsible business behaviour, addressing issues in disadvantaged communities and investing in a just transition. As the buildings sector is a major contributor to climate change – nearly a third of energy-related greenhouse gas emissions within the EU come from buildings – improving energy performance of buildings is central to these efforts.

In December 2023, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU reached a provisional agreement on the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD). Its final adoption is expected under the current Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU. The next step is for Member States to transpose the Directive and other Green Deal related legislation into their national legislation and ensure that their green ambitions are well financed, that they are socially inclusive and that human rights are protected.

In his 2023 [report](#) to the UN Human Rights Council, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing emphasizes the severe impact of the climate crisis on the global enjoyment of the right to adequate housing while. He acknowledges that housing practices also contribute significantly to climate change. The Special Rapporteur advocates for a just transition toward housing that aligns with human rights, is resilient to climate challenges, and is carbon neutral. He contends that the costs of this transition in the housing sector should be equitably distributed among and within countries, as well as among public authorities, taxpayers, homeowners, renters, or other affected groups, aiming to prevent any vulnerable or marginalized groups from being left behind. His 2023 [report](#) to the General Assembly highlighted the escalating housing costs in many countries and underlined the need to ensure that housing is not only available, environmentally sustainable, but as well affordable for all, in particular for households with low incomes.

These concerns have been echoed by the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless, FEANTSA, whose work on climate change and the right to housing has concentrated precisely on the risks and opportunities of the energy transition for the most vulnerable people and households. For this transition to be socially sustainable, it is critical that measures are in place to protect households, not only from skyrocketing renovation costs and rent increases, but also from gentrification, displacement and exclusion from the housing market.



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The UN Human Rights Regional Office for Europe, FEANTSA and the UN Human Settlements Programme are joining forces to host a Human Rights Talk on ensuring the right to adequate housing in Europe's green transition. It builds on priorities put forth by the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU in this area, notably pursuing a green and just transition and access to decent and affordable housing for all. The discussion will reflect on achievements made in the 2019-2024 EU legislative cycle, how we can build on those and make sure that no one is left behind in Europe's green transition.

The Human Rights Talk will take place on **8 March 2023 from 11:00 to 12:30** at the UN House in Brussels. It will bring together the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, as well as representatives from international organizations, EU institutions, the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU and civil society organizations. A light lunch will be offered after the event.

Programme

11:00 Welcome

- Elena Kountouri Tapiero, UN Human Rights Regional Representative for Europe a.i.
- Maria Aldanas, Coordinator of Housing Rights Watch

11:10 Setting the scene:

- UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, Balakrishnan Rajagopal

11:25 Reactions from the panel:

Discussion moderated by Annika Lenz, Programme Management Officer UN Human Settlements Programme

- Tadhg O'Briain, Deputy Head of Unit Consumers, Local Initiatives, Just Transition at DG Energy
- Bernard Mazijn, Director, Cabinet of the Minister for Climate, Environment, Sustainable Development and Green Deal of Belgium
- Anna Zsófia Bajomi, Energy Poverty Policy Officer, European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless
- Marlies Hesselman, Assistant Professor International Law at the University of Groningen

Questions & answers

12:25 Closing

Elena Kountouri Tapiero, UN Human Rights Regional Representative for Europe a.i.

12:30 Networking lunch