

Recommendations Report

CYPRUS CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON HOUSING



EU-CIEMBLY
Democracy for All



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INTRODUCTION

In April and May 2026, the first Cyprus Citizens' Assembly on Housing brought together **60 Cyprus residents** to discuss **housing issues** in Cyprus and propose recommendations for dealing with housing problems in our communities.

The Assembly took place in **three sessions**: two online and one in-person. People from across Cyprus, from different backgrounds and walks of life and with different experiences, came together to **learn, discuss**, and propose **solutions** to the Cyprus housing situation.

SESSION 1

Getting to know each other and mapping Cyprus's housing issues

The first session, which took place on 22 April, started with a series of discussions, getting to know each other and **reflecting on our own backgrounds and experiences** and how this could influence the discussions going forward.

Participants reflected on a number of statements, which highlighted the difference of experiences and views within the group. This ice-breaking activity also brought to the surface some of the **structural, institutional, and social dimensions of housing**, and the fact that different people experience housing problems in different ways.

The project team then presented a series of housing issues in Cyprus, which emerged from our own research on the topic, and asked participants to **select and prioritise the issues** they would like to focus on during the remainder of the Citizens' Assembly.

SESSION 1

Participants expressed their opinions, views, and experiences regarding the issue of housing in Cyprus. The discussion revealed **themes, issues, and problems** that were not necessarily obvious at the research level and which do not always receive the same attention in the public dialogue as more technical issues related to housing in Cyprus.

For instance, the participants raised dimensions relating to **disability, discrimination, intergenerational living, and housing loans**. The following issues (in no particular order) emerged as topics of priority for the participants. This did not mean that participants thought the rest of the topics were of less importance. It simply signalled the way in which they shaped the agenda of the forthcoming Assembly sessions.

Co-habitation as a model for addressing housing issues

Discrimination in relation to housing

Poor quality of housing stock

Housing difficulties for people with disabilities

Poor institutional framework relating to housing decisions

New housing supply vs real societal needs

SESSION 2

Listening and Deliberating

In the second session, which took place in person at the University of Cyprus in Nicosia on 25 April 2026, 37 participants were divided into **smaller groups** to discuss the issues outlined above.

These discussions were enhanced by the intervention of a series of **invited speakers** who presented their work, expertise and experience regarding various social aspects of the issue. The presentations began with **Ms Niovi Georgiade**, from the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality, who spoke about the **gender aspect** of housing and how the choices made by decision-making bodies regarding housing measures and incentives affect women and men differently. Ms Georgiade explained the need to integrate the gender dimension into the views taken, giving food for thought to the participants.

Mr Mattheos Demetriades, representing the Secretary General of the Cyprus Red Cross, Mr Argyrou, spoke about the challenges faced by **vulnerable population** groups in Cyprus in relation to housing. He emphasised how different factors, such as gender, age, socio-economic status and ethnicity interact and influence citizens' access to safe, adequate and affordable housing.

Dr Stefanos Spaneas, University of Nicosia, CODECA Organisation, then spoke to participants about the interrelated relationship between **housing and social cohesion**, and the need for a **national strategy** based on this link and informed by the democratic participation of citizens through participatory platforms such as citizens' assemblies.

Finally, **Mr Kleanthis Pissarides**, Head of Student Support at the University of Cyprus, spoke about the challenges faced by **young students**, especially those from vulnerable or underprivileged households, as well as **foreign students**, in finding affordable and functional housing that would allow them to start and complete their studies successfully.

The interventions by the guest speakers touched on **social and institutional aspects** of the housing issue that are not always at the forefront of public debate. They brought into the room the voice of citizens who do not necessarily have the opportunity, the means, and the ability to be part of the decisions where those are taken. This continued in the small group discussions that took place after the interventions: participants shared both their own issues and experiences as well as those of their fellow citizens in their communities.

Through **discussions, brainstorming, and consultations**, each group came up with a series of proposals that aimed to answer the **main theme** of the Assembly:

'How should we address housing issues in Cyprus?'

These proposals were compiled by the project team after the session. We grouped them by identifying patterns and common points and themes within them, resulting in **12 main proposals**. The third and final session, which took place online on 6 May, allowed participants to reflect on the draft proposals, evaluate them in relation to the Assembly's objective for an inclusive public debate, and approve a final set of recommendations that will be promoted to relevant decision-making bodies.

SESSION 3

Refining and Finalising Recommendations

In the third session of the Assembly, the participants **reviewed the 12 main recommendations** that derived from their work during the in-person assembly.

The session started with two welcome messages. **Mr Michalis Hadjipantela**, MEP, and **Mr Panayiotis Palates**, the Commissioner for the Rights of the Citizen, welcomed the work of the assembly and thanked the participants for their contribution to this democratic participation pilot. Both Mr Hadjipantela and Mr Palates - as well as the guest speakers that joined the in-person assembly - expressed the wish to formally **receive the group's recommendation report** and discuss further follow-up steps with the participants and the organisers. Mr Palates in particular expressed a particular interest in considering how Citizens' Assemblies may constitute a new form of democratic participation in the political landscape of Cyprus.

In turn, the organising team explained to the participants how their recommendations from the previous session were organised together so that they express the work of the group as a whole, and they presented some **additional factual information** about housing in Cyprus that could help in finalising the list of recommendations.

Participants then joined their groups for a **small-group round of discussions**, with each group **working on three recommendations**. They were encouraged by the facilitators to move from sharing personal stories, views, and experiences to reflecting on the impact of their recommendations **at a more collective and societal level**: the level of the community. In the small groups, the participants reflected on the fact that people experience policies differently depending on their circumstances and on a combination of different factors that affect their day-to-day lives.

While some of the recommendations were modified or enhanced, others stayed the same. A total of **14 recommendations** derived from the work of the Cyprus Citizens' Assembly on Housing, and are documented below. An explanatory note is provided where relevant.

CYPRUS CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON HOUSING

RECOMMENDATIONS

The members of the Cyprus Citizens' Assembly on Housing, which deliberated between April and May 2026, recommend the following **list of measures** for dealing with housing issues in Cyprus (in no particular order). Where appropriate, the recommendations are accompanied by a short explanatory note.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Activate vacant, inactive, abandoned, and underused properties

We recommend the **mandatory utilisation of vacant, abandoned, and underused properties** for housing purposes, with the aim of increasing the available housing stock and reducing housing pressure and market prices. The proposal also seeks to contribute to the **revitalisation of neighborhoods** and the **promotion of a circular economy** through the reuse of existing buildings.

The possibility of implementing mechanisms for the mandatory use or rental of idle properties should be examined, where appropriate, in parallel to ensuring that the properties meet basic suitability and safety standards for habitation.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Ensure an inclusive decision-making process

Ensure a more inclusive process for decision-making on housing issues, housing incentive schemes, and housing strategies by **conducting broad consultations** with the **public** and **affected groups**, including on housing policies for persons with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Limit property concentration and require social housing in new developments

Introduce measures to **limit the number of properties** a single person or entity can **own** or **rent**. Introduce mandatory requirements for **new housing developments** to provide a mandatory proportion of **social housing**.

Explanatory note

This recommendation is seen as a way to improve access to housing and **reduce inequalities**. Several participants emphasised that limiting property concentration could **reduce speculative behaviour** and **lower rental prices**, thereby benefiting tenants—particularly vulnerable groups such as single parents and migrants. It was also noted that increasing the supply of social housing could **reduce discrimination** and **competition in the rental market**.

There was a shared recognition that this measure alone would not be sufficient to address systemic discrimination in the housing market. Participants stressed the need for **a combination of policies** rather than relying on a single intervention.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Strengthen enforcement of anti-discrimination and tenant protection laws

Strengthen the enforcement of anti-discrimination and tenant protection laws in the housing sector, including through clearer enforcement responsibilities, a clearer role for the police where appropriate, and the introduction of a fair evaluation or accountability system for both landlords and tenants.

Explanatory note

Participants highlighted the importance of having clear enforcement mechanisms to **protect tenants** from **unfair practices**, including **discrimination** and **fraud**. Participants referred to concrete risks in the current system, such as **informal rental arrangements** (e.g. via social media platforms), which may expose tenants to unsafe conditions or exploitation.

The proposal was also seen as **beneficial for landlords**, as it would create **a more balanced and transparent system** where both parties are held accountable. Participants emphasised that **clearer roles for enforcement bodies**—potentially including the police—would help ensure that existing laws are actually implemented in practice.

There was a strong sense that this recommendation could address real and urgent issues affecting vulnerable groups, who may otherwise be pushed into precarious or exploitative situations.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Promote collective living housing models

Explore and promote models of collective and, where **appropriate, intergenerational collective housing**, which combine independent private living spaces with shared infrastructure and spaces for social interaction, with the aim of **strengthening social cohesion and mutual support**, as well as fostering an increased **sense of neighbourhood and community**.

As a first step, we recommend a pilot implementation of **co-habitation models** for specific population groups, such as **older persons or retirees**. Such a pilot programme will allow the full exploration of how co-habitation models could operate in Cyprus's social and cultural environment.

Explanatory note

These forms of housing should be developed in **areas** with easy access to **basic services and public transport**, and should be accompanied by support mechanisms for vulnerable groups and actions that strengthen the residents' coexistence and public participation.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Apply a disability-sensitive lens to housing support measures

Ensure that **housing incentive schemes** and **support measures** are designed, implemented, assessed, and reviewed **through a disability-oriented lens** that recognises various forms of disability, accessibility requirements, and support needs. Ensure that persons with disabilities, as well as social actors and the families of disabled persons should be **meaningfully consulted** before the adoption of housing measures or incentive schemes, and the impact of such measures should be regularly assessed in terms of their accessibility, inclusiveness, and effectiveness for persons with disabilities.

A disability-sensitive lens to housing support measures will provide input to decision-makers about the need for **accessible housing upgrades**, for **government-funded private sector renovations**, and for taking into account the impact on family and the reality of caregivers.

Explanatory note

NGOs and other non-governmental actors in Cyprus provide accessibility services and information, but there is currently **no central, governmental platform** that can help disabled people understand available housing schemes or support incentives, find accessible housing, or be informed about disability-oriented eligibility criteria and how those may impact their application to funding and support schemes.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Create decentralised homecare services for persons with disabilities

Establish decentralised homecare services for persons with disabilities to **support independent living, promote dignity,** and ensure that persons can **access appropriate care and assistance** within their own homes and communities.

Explanatory note

Disabled people should not be pushed into elder-care services. We recommend the establishment of **government-led or government-supported disability-focused homecare**. Although this type of services is already provided through healthcare providers with the support of NGOs and other non-governmental actors, the **existing homecare services** are **fragmented and unsustainable** without additional funding

RECOMMENDATION 8

Promote longer-term rental security

Require or encourage the use of **longer-duration rental contracts** to provide **greater housing security** for tenants, reduce the **risk of evictions**, and **prevent arbitrary rent increases**.

Explanatory note

Participants broadly agreed that longer-term rental contracts could significantly **improve housing stability**. Many stressed that current **short-term contracts** create **uncertainty**, forcing tenants to frequently search for new housing and sometimes move unnecessarily. This instability was also linked to stress and **negative impacts on mental well-being**.

The recommendation was therefore seen as particularly beneficial for tenants **seeking continuity**, including those who wish to remain in the same area for work or personal reasons. It was also suggested that longer-term arrangements could **reduce arbitrary rent increases**.

However, some concerns were raised. A key issue was **reduced flexibility**: participants noted that individuals living in unstable or difficult circumstances might find it harder to relocate if needed. There was also discussion about **potential unintended consequences**, such as higher upfront deposits required by landlords for longer contracts. Finally, participants mentioned the need for effective enforcement mechanisms to prevent abuse or fraud.

RECOMMENDATION 9

Regulate the housing market based on objective criteria

We recommend **the regulation and supervision of the housing market** based on objective criteria, such as the **dwelling's size**, the **condition** and **age of the building**, as well as its **proximity to services and infrastructure**.

In particular, we recommend considering the implementation of a **housing quality assessment** and **scoring system** for determining maximum rental prices (based on a points system), drawing on good practices from other European countries, while simultaneously ensuring equal treatment and a high standard of protection both for renters and landlords.

RECOMMENDATION 10

Establish an entity providing housing quality oversight

Establish a housing oversight body / entity responsible for assessing the **condition, quality, and safety of housing**, including the designation of dangerous buildings; reviewing the **suitability of houses** offered to renting or selling to persons with disabilities; and supporting the **resolution of disputes** between landlords and tenants.

RECOMMENDATION 11

Adopt a comprehensive legal framework to ensure good housing quality

Adopt a **concrete and clear legal framework** to address the **condition, quality, and safety** of housing.

Explanatory note

The establishment of organisations or oversight bodies is not sufficient if the legal framework is missing. The framework should include **measures concerning dangerous buildings, the suitability of housing options** for people with disabilities (buying or renting), and obligations for landlords to **ensure quality control** of their properties prior to renting them (e.g. through a certificate-issuing process). This should include a clear and well-communicated process for declaring a house dangerous and ensuring housing options for the residents until the problem is addressed.

RECOMMENDATION 12

Direct housing subsidies and housing incentive schemes to those most in need

Ensure that housing subsidies and incentive schemes are **directed towards**, and **made accessible** to, those who need them most, including single parents, parents with multiple children, persons with disabilities, people in long-term unemployment, and international students. Provide more **transparency** in how the eligibility for housing schemes is assessed.

Allow approval for a government housing incentive scheme to be used as a basis for negotiating a reduced bank down payment when applying for a housing loan.

RECOMMENDATION 13

Improve access to housing information and support

Simplify access to, and **raise public awareness** of, websites, applications, and information sources related to housing and housing finance, including welfare support and Government-owned housing, through **simplified information channels** and **targeted awareness campaigns**, particularly in light of the difficulties many people face in accessing legal advice.

Explanatory note

Measures might also include **a platform** where **citizens can interact directly** with actors that may be able to help them e.g. by providing information or answers to their questions, especially if they are first-time renters or if they are newly-residents in the country. The communication of information should be made **more accessible**, and **online** and **printed forms** should be tailored to various accessibility and support needs.

The participants agreed that this is **a complementary measure** and cannot, on its own, resolve deeper structural problems such as the lack of social housing or the lack of enforcement of tenants' rights (mentioned above under other recommendations). **Improving communication** and **housing information mechanisms** can provide support even if they do not solve the actual problem.

RECOMMENDATION 14

Establish an independent watchdog to monitor housing-related actions, laws, and policies

Establish an **independent body**, such as a **watchdog**, **NGO**, or **dedicated organisation**, to monitor housing-related laws, actions, and policy updates.

Explanatory note

The objective of the organisation will be to **represent the voice of the people**, express peoples' concerns, issues, suggestions, and **provide support**. This recommendation was seen as particularly beneficial in addressing barriers to participation that arise due to discrimination, whereby people may often feel uncomfortable or not know where to raise problems around housing contracts, problems with landlords, or issues with inadequate housing quality. The organisation can additionally facilitate the provision of advice and guidance **for migrant groups** including through community-based support and pairing with local residents.

ABOUT EU-CIEMBLY

EU-CIEMBLY is an international research project funded by the European Union's Horizon Research and Innovation Programme, addresses the need for the introduction of new forms of citizens' participation and deliberation in EU political life.

Our project aims to create a prototype for a Citizens' Assembly that addresses issues of intersectionality, inclusiveness, and equality.

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