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## **Informal Settlements Policies. Addressing the gap between plans and practices**

Housing Solutions Platform Debates | 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2024, 10:00-12.15

### Concept

Slums or informal settlements have been defined as a particular type of inadequate housing characterised by insecurity of tenure, lack of access to basic services and infrastructure, as well as dwellings that lack quality/durability. Within the ETHOS definition, people living in informal settlements, although they are not roofless, are nonetheless homeless, as they live under the threat of eviction in unfit structures. Thus, addressing the living conditions of people in informal settlements lies at the intersection of homelessness and housing policies.

Informal settlements have been historically considered a feature of urbanisation processes, where internal and external migration together with poverty and housing exclusion lead to the formation of such alternative precarious living spaces. However, the role of public authorities in such processes should not be overlooked, as they sometimes actively contribute to them through repeated evictions from the city and institutionalised segregation. Roma people, migrants and other racialised communities are disproportionately affected by housing deprivation and informal living. In the context of the Roma Inclusion Strategy, the European Parliament Resolution in 2022 called for an EU action plan for Roma settlements and the Council of the European Union, under the Spanish Presidency in 2023, invited the Commission to support the investment of EU funds in housing and infrastructure to address inadequate and segregated settlements. Such calls reference Principle 19 of the European Pillar of Social Rights, the 2021 Lisbon Declaration on the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness, as well as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, amongst which Goal 11 explicitly targets people living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing.

Despite this supra-national framework, worrying developments have been taking place in various national contexts, where evictions from settlements, lack of rehousing options and inadequate social housing supply for the most vulnerable contribute to further pushing affected communities to the margins. Without proper (re)housing policies, the tightening of anti-squatting laws, as in France and Belgium, feeds into increasing homelessness and housing exclusion through more evictions that remove people from one space or settlement, while pushing them to another such informal living situation.

The aim of our debate is to discuss informal settlement policies in relation to adequate rehousing. The upgrading and regularisation of informal settlements represents an alternative policy direction, albeit as potentially controversial in its implementation as rehousing. We bring together representatives of social services organisations, activist collectives, European institutions, as well as researchers to analyse obstacles and achievements in such rehousing programs in France, Italy, Portugal, Belgium and Romania.

## Programme

### **10:00-10.55: Between national and local policies. Case study presentations Round 1**

#### **The slum clearance programme in France**

Sarah Coupechoux - FAP

Célia Mougel - Romeurope, "L'Observatoire des expulsions des lieux de vie informels".

#### **Evaluation of policies regarding informal settlements. The post-mobile project in Ghent**

Sophie Samyn, University of Ghent

#### **Rehousing in the Italian policies of overcoming "the Roma camp system"**

Elisa de Pieri, Amnesty International

Diletta Alese & Mariangela De Blasi, Arci Solidarieta, Roma

La versione di Jean, Torino

#### **Housing policies in informal settlements in Portugal**

Gianpiero Iacovelli, University Institute of Lisbon

### **10.55-11.00: Break**

### **11.00-11.30: Case study presentations Round 2**

#### **Rehousing projects in informal settlements in Romania**

George Zamfir, Social Housing NOW, Cluj-Napoca

Mihail Sandu-Dumitriu, The Common Front for the Right to Housing, Bucharest

#### **Informal settlement policies across Central and Eastern Europe**

Gyorgy Sumeghy, Habitat for Humanity International

#### **European instruments for policy development regarding informal settlements**

Florin Popa, DG Reform

### **11:30-12:15: Debate & Q&A from the public**