

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

14th meeting of the Ministers of Housing of the Member States of the European Union

1. The 14th meeting of the Ministers of Housing of the Member States of the European Union took place in Genval (Belgium) on 28th June 2002.

This meeting was held in conjunction with the the 3rd European Ministers conference on sustainable housing.

2. Although housing policy is the exclusive responsibility of the European Union Member States, the Ministers considered that the annual meeting of housing ministers, a forum for comparing and exchanging information on the policies pursued, was useful and necessary. These meetings contribute to the formulation of measures to promote social cohesion, the environment and sustainable development, in line with the Charter of Fundamental Rights.
3. The Ministers expressed their thanks to the Spanish Presidency for having organised a preparatory meeting of the European housing focal points which laid the foundations for the discussions held at this conference.
4. The Ministers, in accordance with the final communiqué of the 12th and 13th meetings, repeated their strong support for the decisions made by the Council of Ministers in Lisbon to favour social inclusion. They reaffirmed that Housing is one of the core elements in the combat against social exclusion.

Therefore, they welcomed :

- The Conclusions of the Laeken European Council (paragraph 28) : "The first joint report on social inclusion and the establishment of a set of common indicators constitute important elements in the policy defined at Lisbon for eradicating poverty and promoting social inclusion, taking in health and housing. The European Council stresses the need to reinforce the statistical machinery and calls on the Commission gradually to involve the candidate countries in this process".
- The setting up by Eurostat of a task force to develop common methodologies to improve the understanding of homelessness.
- The Conclusions of the Barcelona European Council (paragraph 24) : "The European Council stresses the importance of the fight against poverty and social exclusion. Member States are invited to set targets, in their National Action Plans, for significantly reducing the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion by 2010".

5. The Ministers underlined the fact that the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and the pursuit of sustainable development are intimately linked and interdependent, and that the development of human settlements is a key factor for sustainable development. They stress the importance of coordination between urban renewal and housing policies. The Ministers invited Denmark, which will lead the European delegation at the Earth Summit 2002 in Johannesburg (26 August - 6th September 2002), to pay attention to these different interrelationships and to communicate the decisions taken at the 3^d European Ministers Conference on sustainable housing. The Ministers invited Belgium to join this proceeding.
6. The Ministers noted that Belgium is currently gathering the European Union statistics on housing to be published in the second semester of 2002. They welcomed Finland's proposal to form an open-ended ad-hoc group of experts in order to look into the distribution of tasks regarding statistics, the content of publications on statistics, and the collection, consistency and comparability of data. This group would include representatives from Member States of the European Union, Eurostat and UN/ECE.
7. The Ministers welcomed Denmark's initiative to organise the European Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion (Aarhus - 17-18 October 2002) in which a workshop will be dedicated to housing.
8. The Ministers invited Denmark, Greece and Italy, which will hold successively the Presidency of the European Union during the next semesters, to explore issues raised and the best way to implement the decisions and the ask taken in the political statement adopted at the 13th meeting of the Ministers of Housing of the Member States of the European Union.
9. The Ministers thanked Italy, which will take on the Presidency of the European Union in the second half of 2003, for hosting the next meeting of Housing Ministers on the topic "Housing policies and European integration : problems and prospects". They thanked Greece for organising, during the first semester of 2003, the preparatory meeting for this session.