

FAR RIGHT IN EUROPE

HOUSING EXCLUSION

THE **DANGERS!**

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Un combat en héritage

TABLE

INTRODUCTION	4
PART I NEGLECTED HOUSING POLICIES	6
PART II DISMANTLING THE WELFARE STATE	17
PART III OVERTLY ANTI-IMMIGRATION POLICIES	20
CONCLUSION	24

FAR RIGHT IN EUROPE : THE DANGERS OF HOUSING EXCLUSION
2026

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FAR-RIGHT PARTIES IN EU GOVERNMENTS

- FAR-RIGHT LED GOVERNMENT
- FAR-RIGHT IN GOVERNEMENT
- NO FAR-RIGHT GOVERNMENT
- SUPPORT WITHOUT PARTICIPATION



In Europe, four countries are currently led by governments headed by far-right parties: Italy, Hungary, Czechia, and, to some extent, Belgium. While these states remain in the minority, far-right ideas are nonetheless gaining ground across the continent.

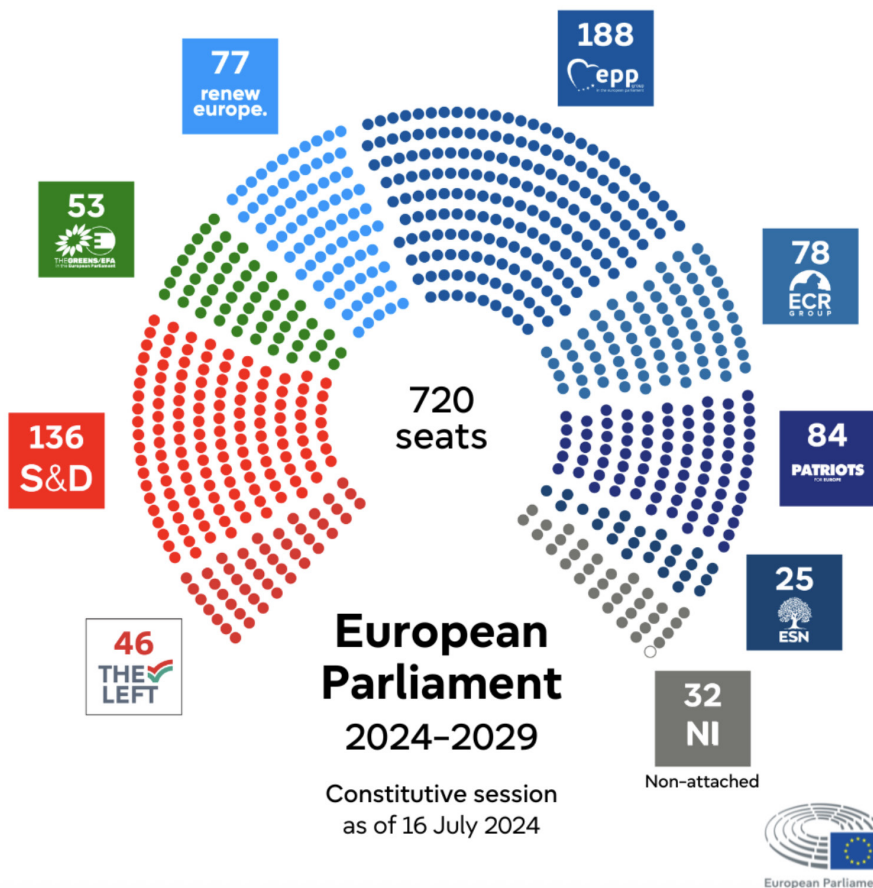
This dynamic is largely driven by alliances formed between so-called traditional right-wing parties and far-right movements, allowing certain majorities to gain power. This is the case in Austria, for example, where the conservative government of Christian Stocker relies on this type of partnership. Elsewhere, some administrations have adopted far-right themes to broaden their electoral base.

In Denmark, for example, the Social Democratic government of Mette Frederiksen adopted a particularly restrictive stance on immigration during its election campaigns.

Moreover, the rise of far-right parties in national parliaments and local elections contributes to the normalisation of their ideas. These ideas are increasingly taken up by mainstream political forces and are gradually gaining ground in political and media debates.

This trend is also evident across Europe. In the 2024 European elections, the far right won 187 of 720 seats, up from 118 in the previous term, representing 26% of the European Parliament. For the first time in the history of European institutions, the right and far right joined forces in November 2025 conservative and far-right parties formed an alliance with the aim of easing the social and environmental regulations Europe intends to impose on businesses.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S COMPOSITION



The years 2026 and 2027 are shaping up to be decisive, with major elections scheduled in Portugal, Germany, Spain and Hungary, amid the steady rise of far-right parties and the spread of their ideas.

Where the far right holds influence, social protections tend to be rolled back: instead of addressing the housing crisis, the economic and social choices of far-right parties risk increasing the number of households in need while weakening the protections that still shield them from an increasingly unregulated housing market.

Since 2015, housing prices across the European Union have risen by 60%. Today, nearly 9% of Europeans spend more than 40% of their income on housing, with the poorest populations hit hardest. Housing has become one of the foremost concerns of European citizens and shortages have sparked protests in cities such as Lisbon, Amsterdam, Prague, Milan and London – with demonstrators denouncing soaring rents and the growing impossibility of homeownership.

Amid these concerns, far-right parties in the Netherlands, Ireland, Portugal and more recently Germany have exploited the housing crisis in their election campaigns, blaming previous governments for inaction and singling out immigration as the main culprit. In February 2025, for example, Marine Le Pen highlighted homelessness figures in France on her X account, attributing the problem to ‘mass immigration, which increases pressure on social housing and the private housing stock available to working-class families’.

Rising inequalities and increasing household insecurity have in recent years created fertile ground for far-right ideologies. Drawing on ‘welfare chauvinism’,¹ European far-right parties have since the 1990s championed a protective state, but only for nationals. They promote a dualist welfare model: generous for the ‘deserving’ and neoliberal for the ‘undeserving’.² This category primarily targets people with migration backgrounds, but also includes those labelled ‘lazy’ or ‘parasites’ who supposedly fail to contribute enough, in contrast to the ‘workers’.³ Such discourse contributes significantly to the stigmatisation of certain social groups, including migrants and long-term unemployed people. By advocating tougher migration policies and housing access based on national preference, these political parties appeal to an increasingly younger electorate driven by a sense of social decline.⁴

In practice, however, the policies advanced by the far right undermine the most disadvantaged while favouring the wealthiest. Their rise to power in Europe, supported in part by ultra-liberal trends abroad notably under Donald Trump, poses a significant risk of worsening the housing crisis and social inequalities.

1. Rydgren, J. (2004) ‘Explaining the Emergence of Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties: The Case of Denmark’, *West European Politics*, 27(3), pp. 474–502.

2. Chueri J. (2023) ‘The Populist-Radical-Right Impact on the Welfare State’, *Social Europe*, 18 MARCH.

3. Chueri J. (2022) ‘An emerging populist welfare paradigm? How populist radical right-wing parties are reshaping the welfare state’, *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 45(4), pp. 383–409.

4. See for example the works of Félicien Faury in this regard.

PART I

NEGLECTED HOUSING POLICIES

Although some far-right parties have explicitly cited the housing crisis as a campaign issue, none of them have committed to implementing proactive housing policies.

Housing production is stagnating, financial support is being cut, markets remain unregulated and renovation is often neglected. In countries where the far right holds power, housing policies are being abandoned. In 2024, the European Parliament estimated that three million housing units would need to be built each year to meet the current housing crisis. The rise of far-right parties, which refuse to invest in the production of affordable housing, leaves Europe ill-equipped to meet the challenges it faces. Against this background, demand for affordable housing is likely to grow exponentially, leaving many households without any viable housing solutions.

STATE DISENGAGEMENT FROM THE PROVISION OF SOCIAL HOUSING

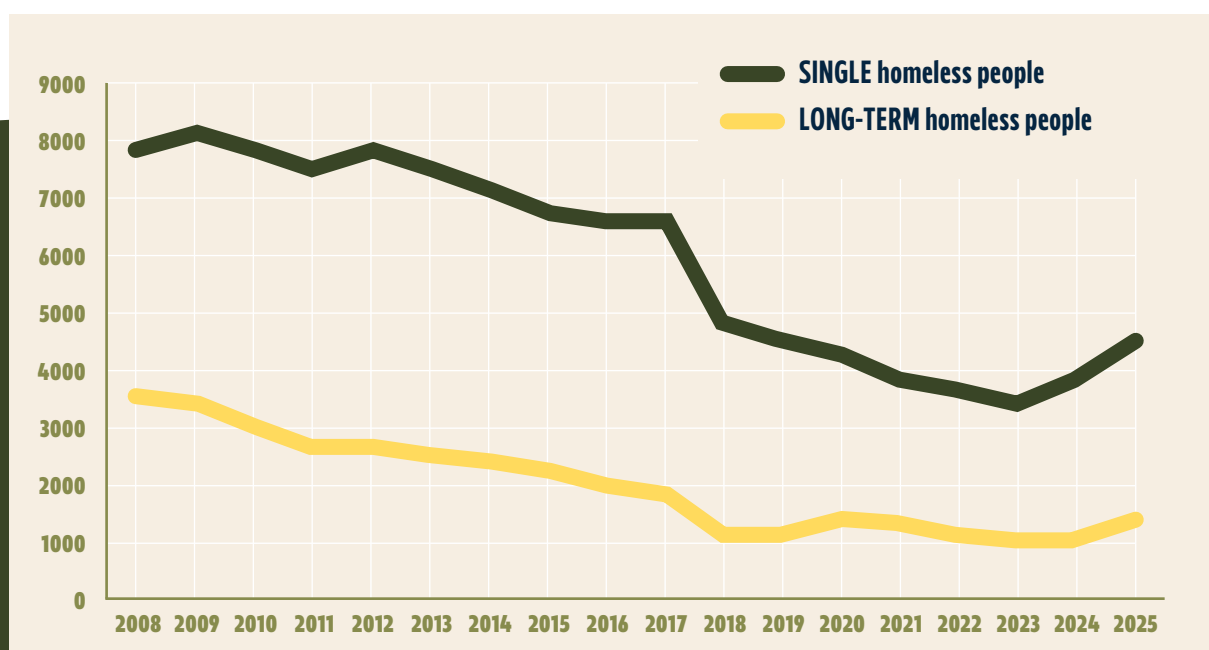
FINLAND: RECENT RISE IN HOMELESSNESS

Long held up as a model for its homelessness policies, Finland now faces a sudden reversal.

For the first time in over a decade, the number of homeless people increased in 2024 and 2025. By 2025, 4,579 people living alone were homeless in Finland, an increase of 1,150 compared with 2023.

HOMELESS PEOPLE: SINGLE AND LONG-TERM

IN FINLAND BETWEEN 2008 AND 2025 © Centre de construction de logements subventionnés par l'État



And with good reason, the new government's intentions are clear: housing is no longer a priority in Finland. The new coalition between the conservatives and the far right has decided to slow housing construction and implement significant cuts to housing support, particularly for students.

While budgets for household housing assistance have been halved, in Helsinki the number of appointments with these services increased by 80% in 2024. The Y Foundation, a key player in Finland's Housing First model, directly links these budget cuts to rising evictions and homelessness.⁵

At the same time, without abolishing it, the government has chosen to weaken the role of Finland's Housing Finance and Development Centre (ARA), an independent body previously responsible for planning housing production. It has now been absorbed into the Ministry of the Environment, losing its autonomy. Meanwhile, the Ministerial Committee on Economic Policy has decided that the Housing Production Fund will be incorporated into the general state budget from 2026.⁶

These institutional reorganisations have been accompanied by drastic cuts to the adapted housing budget. Only €15 million were allocated for investment in support of vulnerable groups in 2025, compared with €63 million in 2024 and actual spending of €120 million in 2023. These subsidies are intended to support housing for the extremely vulnerable: older people, those with mental health or addiction issues, young people in need of special support and students.

As a result of these budget cuts, and despite a growing need among the younger generation, the construction of new housing for young people and students could come to a complete halt, with the government deciding to redirect the remaining subsidies to other groups.

5. Ojankoski T. (2025) 'Homelessness on the Rise in Finland', Y-Säätiö, 10 February.

6. Pirkanmaan hyvinvointialue (2024) 'Asunto- ja rakentamisen kehittämiskeskukseen tilannekatsaus', Konserni- ja toimitilajaosto, 26 November.

THE NETHERLANDS: A HOUSING PLAN WITHOUT FUNDING

In the Netherlands, until the recent legislative elections in October 2025, housing policy had increasingly reflected an ideological framework shaped by far-right influence, particularly following the electoral rise of Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom (PVV) and its ability to shape the political agenda.

Faced with a structural housing shortage and steadily rising prices, the government's responses tend to favour a restrictive and exclusionary approach rather than large-scale investment in social housing.

The coalition had announced an ambitious plan to build 100,000 new affordable homes per year, based on local agreements, or 'Woontop', between municipalities, developers and investors. However, at a summit held at the end of 2024, these stakeholders concluded that the targets were unlikely to be met given the level of funding provided by the government and expressed concern over potential conflicts between municipalities and the state regarding financial contributions.⁷

The 'corporations', non-profit organisations managing social housing, had set a target of building 30,000 homes per year. In 2024, however, only 14,300 were completed due to insufficient funding.

The 2025 legislative election campaign was heavily influenced by radical right and far-right parties, which blamed the housing shortage on the so-called 'migrant tsunami' highlighted by Geert Wilders, leader of the Party for Freedom (PVV). The new centre-right coalition in power since 27 January 2026 has pledged to address the housing issue as well, but with a focus on budgetary savings.

7. Business AM (2024) 'Le gouvernement néerlandais vise 100 000 nouveaux logements par an', Business AM, 11 December.

HUNGARY: HOUSING POLICY MARKED BY NEGLECT

In Hungary, while housing prices tripled between 2015 and 2024,⁸ Viktor Orbán's government decided to sell an entire plot of land in Budapest to Emirati and American developers to create a large business district comprising towers, hotels and luxury shops.

The municipality, led by the opposition party, has launched a legal battle to reclaim the land and instead build affordable housing.⁹ The mayor of Budapest is seeking to address the severe housing crisis affecting the capital.

Unfortunately, since 2022, around €30 billion has been frozen by the European Union because the country has failed to uphold the rule of law. On 1 January 2025, Hungary permanently lost €1 billion, funds that could have been slated for housing policies.¹⁰

8. Hungarian Central Statistical Office (2024), [Housing Prices, Housing Price Index, Q3 2024](#).

9. RFI (2025) 'Hongrie : Budapest vent debout contre un pharaonique projet immobilier de Viktor Orbán', RFI, 31 January.

10. Aronica, S. (2025) 'Housing Rights: Budapest's Challenges and Solutions', Energy Cities, 9 January.



REJECTION OF ANY FORM OF HOUSING MARKET REGULATION

As short-term rentals flood the housing market and both rental and sale prices soar, far-right parties refuse any form of regulation of the private market.

In Spain, the Socialist government of Pedro Sánchez announced plans to increase taxes on the purchase of **second homes** by foreigners and on Airbnb-style rentals in January 2025. However, opposition parties on the radical right, Vox and the Partido Popular, rejected these proposals outright, dismissing them as interventionist and utopian.¹¹

They had already used these arguments to block the introduction of **rent controls** in the Murcia region, despite significant price increases there.¹² Vox openly seeks to repeal the national housing law passed in 2023, which allows regions that wish to do so to implement rent controls. Despite positive results, particularly in Barcelona,¹³ demonstrating the measure's effectiveness in curbing price increases, the far-right party continues to claim that the law has caused rents and property prices to rise.¹⁴

On **taxation**, the Rassemblement National has also strongly opposed proposed laws aimed at reducing the tax benefits enjoyed by short-term rental operators in France. The party has further promised to exempt primary residences from wealth tax, benefiting the richest homeowners.

It also plans to relax inheritance rules, raising the tax-free allowance to €300,000 per child, up from €145,000 at present, and allowing gifts of €100,000 every ten years instead of fifteen. These measures would be significant tax breaks for the wealthiest 10% of the population, with major implications for the perpetuation of inequality.

In Hungary, although the government acknowledged the need to support affordable housing for all socio-economic groups in October 2024, no housing policy measures have yet been implemented to ensure **financial access to housing**.



11. Heller F. (2025) 'Spain taxes tourism to save housing', Euractiv, 14 January.

12. LasNoticiasRM (2025) 'PP y Vox rechazan regular el precio del alquiler en la Región de Murcia', LasNoticiasRM, 11 February.

13. Moreno H. S. (2024) 'Intervenir en los precios de los alquileres: ¿cómo ha impactado la ley de vivienda en Barcelona?', Barcelona Metròpolis, October.

14. VOX (2025) 'VOX exige una Ley de Vivienda con el requisito "los españoles, primero" y bajada de impuestos', VOX España, 27 February.



BACKSLIDING ON ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS AND RENOVATIONS

Far-right parties perform equally poorly when it comes to environmental standards and building renovations. Many promise, or implement, so-called ‘simplification’ measures, which in reality serve as a pretext for deregulation in construction, habitability standards and environmental protection. At the core of their argument, the European Union is blamed for all the problems.

To varying degrees, all far-right parties have run climate-sceptical and Eurosceptic campaigns, be it France’s Rassemblement National, Poland’s PiS, or Italy’s Fratelli d’Italia.¹⁵ They all denounce the burden of European standards, particularly environmental ones, on national policies and household budgets. In Hungary, Orbán and Fidesz regularly criticise European policies for their alleged negative impact on national housing sovereignty, while other parties denounce standards they describe as ‘punitive in the name of environmental protection’.

15. Leading a right-wing and far-right coalition, Giorgia Meloni has been prime minister of Italy since 2022.

In Brussels in 2022, the revision of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive sparked intense debate, driven in particular by far-right parties in Germany and Italy. Germany’s AfD denounced renovation requirements as an infringement of property rights, while in Italy building renovation was portrayed as a threat to the country’s architectural and cultural heritage.¹⁶ The Meloni government has also cut more than €2 billion from urban renewal programmes,¹⁷ including the Programme for Housing Rehabilitation and Quality Living, which was intended to support the renovation of municipal social housing that has been poorly maintained for many years.

Yet the Italian party appears unconcerned by the disappearance of the very urban planning rules it promotes. The ‘Save the House’ decree, issued by Minister Salvini, has mainly served to relax habitability standards, in particular by reducing the legal minimum sizes of homes.¹⁸

This idea of making use of every available square metre also lies at the heart of proposals put forward by the previous Dutch government,

16. Sarchilli A. (2024) ‘Il governo taglia oltre due miliardi alla rigenerazione urbana, l’INU: “Ciripensi”’, INU, 20 November.

17. Canfin P. and Pincherelle K. (2024) ‘Les nouveaux visages européens de l’écologiste d’extrême droite et comment le combattre’, La Grande Conversation, 28 February.

18. Infobuild (2024) ‘Decreto Salva Casa: guida alle semplificazioni edilizie e sanatorie’, Infobuild, 3 October.

which suggested allowing homes to be created in farm buildings, gardens or attics. It also sought to permit the construction of one-and-a-half-storey villas without planning permission, with the aim of increasing housing supply at lower cost.

‘Why can we not add more homes in farm buildings? Why is it allowed to build a house in the garden for your mother if she needs care, but not for your daughter living in the attic?’, asked Mona Keijzer, Dutch Minister for Housing in 2024.¹⁹

The coalition agreement also provided for the easing of construction rules through various measures, notably by speeding up procedures, limiting the scope for appeals and removing certain regulatory constraints.

Governments are also seeking to free up land, running counter to environmental recommendations on limiting land take. In the **Netherlands**, this has meant plans to remove barriers to releasing sites and land, as well as obstacles to construction in rural areas.²⁰ The outgoing housing minister had even pledged to accelerate the construction of 900,000 new homes by 2030, including in areas at risk of flooding.

The government argued that while some environmental regulations are intended to protect health, safety and quality of life, they can also have a restraining effect on construction.²¹

In France, the Rassemblement National prefers subsidising fossil fuel consumption for heating and opposing the ZAN (net zero land take) policy, rather than promoting the renovation of energy-inefficient housing and curbing land take.

Along similar lines, Donald Trump has sought to unlock federal land for new housing development. He has also announced an end to the American Green New Deal and the United States’ commitment to the Paris Agreement. One of his first executive orders aimed to ‘eliminate harmful, coercive climate policies that increase food and fuel costs’.²² The green and resilient renovation programme, worth over one billion dollars and adopted by Congress in 2022 to improve the energy efficiency of buildings through grants or loans to owners of affordable housing, has simply been abandoned.²³

While these parties have proclaimed citizens’ right to decent, affordable housing, the 69.4 million European households living in substandard accommodation or the 11% experiencing energy poverty can no longer hope for improvements to their situation or the prospect of lower energy bills. Worse still, with rising energy costs, their circumstances are likely to deteriorate further.

19. Keijzer M. (2024) ‘We moeten door roeien en ruiten om woningen te realiseren’, BoerBurgerBeweging, 25 October.

20. Bureau Woordvoering Kabinetsformatie (2026) Kabinetsformatie 2025, 21 February.

21. [Link broken](#)

22. The White House (2025) ‘Delivering Emergency Price Relief for American Families and Defeating the Cost-of-Living Crisis’, The White House, 20 January.

23. Bedayn J. (2025) ‘Affordable housing threatened as Trump halts \$1 billion program to extend life of aging buildings’, PBS NewsHour, 12 March.



NATIONAL PREFERENCE AND DISCRIMINATION IN ACCESS TO HOUSING

As with the rest of their agenda, far-right parties advocate a housing policy based on national preference and promote a stigmatising discourse. Whether in access to homeownership or the allocation of social housing, politicians seek to exclude foreign residents from housing assistance. As a result, proposals and measures are primarily targeted at domestic households.

In the Netherlands, the latest coalition agreement,²⁴ for example, proposed no longer giving priority to people with refugee status in the allocation of social housing. Since municipalities are legally obliged to house those granted refugee status, the far right has led many Dutch citizens to believe that foreigners are being widely favoured. Yet a national study conducted by the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers found that only 7% of available municipal housing had been allocated to refugees.

In Spain, Vox, which aims to create a society of ‘small property owners and affordable rents’, advocates giving priority to Spaniards when it comes to access to homeownership.²⁵

Another way of prioritising nationals is to reserve or restrict access to social assistance for newly arrived foreigners. In **Italy**, for example, Matteo Salvini’s League campaigns for housing benefits to be reserved for Italians, explicitly excluding undocumented immigrants.

24. [Bureau Woordvoering Kabinetsformatie \(2026\) Aan de slag – Coalitieakkoord 2026–2030](#), 30 January.

25. [VOX \(2025\) ‘Facilitar la construcción de vivienda, crear un entorno fiscal favorable, priorizar el acceso de los españoles... así es el plan de VOX para recuperar una España de propietarios’](#), VOX España, 6 February.

Meanwhile, the so-called ‘Arizona’²⁶ government in Belgium under Bart De Wever intends to reform the system of allowances granted to people with refugee or subsidiary protection status. Individuals arriving in the country will now have to reside in Belgium for five years before becoming eligible for social assistance. The integration assistance, which recognised refugees currently receive automatically, will also be subject to stricter conditions.

These policies, which seek to place the blame for the housing crisis on migrant communities, exacerbate the discrimination already faced by foreigners and some groups, including Black people,²⁷ Muslims²⁸ and Roma.

In the Netherlands, for example, the housing shortage has led an increasing number of student flat-share adverts on social media to explicitly state that they do not accept foreign tenants.²⁹

In its latest report on housing from October 2024, Amnesty International denounced institutional racism and discrimination against Roma households in Slovakia who tend to live in dilapidated buildings on the outskirts of towns, often under short-term rental contracts and lack access to social assistance.³⁰

In **Hungary** too, Roma people, who make up around 7% of the population, are reported by advocacy groups to account for more than 80% of those affected by measures criminalising homelessness, such as bans on sleeping rough or penalties for begging.

In August 2024, Viktor Orbán’s government issued a decree that led to the expulsion of many Ukrainians from shelters. The decree restricted access to accommodation solely to people displaced from designated war zones, with the government changing which areas qualified each month, leaving hundreds of families homeless.³¹ According to advocacy groups, the refugees affected were largely Roma households.

In March 2025, Donald Trump announced a major campaign, formalised through an inter-agency memorandum of understanding called ‘American Housing for American Citizens’, aimed at evicting undocumented residents from public housing.

‘This new agreement will leverage resources including technology and personnel to ensure that American people are the only priority when it comes to public housing’, said Scott Turner, United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

26. The Arizona government is a federal coalition composed of several parties: liberals, socialists, Christian democrats, and is led by the Flemish nationalists. Whether the latter should be considered part of the far right remains a subject of debate. However, at the European level, the party belongs to the ECR group alongside the Reconquête party.

27. [European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights \(2023\) ‘Black people in the EU face ever more racism’, FRA, 25 October.](#)

28. [European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights \(2024\) ‘Muslims in Europe face ever more racism and discrimination’, FRA, 24 October.](#)

29. [Courrier Expat \(2024\) ‘“Dutch only” : ces colocations néerlandaises où les étudiants étrangers ne sont pas les bienvenus’, Courrier International, 16 October.](#)

30. [Amnesty International Slovakia \(2024\) Nedosiahnuteľná potreba bývať – výskumná správa, 10 October.](#) and [Amnesty International Slovakia \(2024\) Unattainable Right to Housing: Report on Right to Housing in Slovakia.](#)

31. [France Culture \(2024\) ‘La Revue de presse internationale : émission du jeudi 22 août 2024’, France Culture, 22 August.](#)

STIGMATISATION AND CRIMINALISATION OF POVERTY AND HOMELESSNESS

Far from aiding those most at risk, policies pursued in far-right countries aim instead to render poverty and homelessness invisible by criminalising those affected.

In **Hungary**, the Fidesz party has relied on a divisive ‘us against them’ narrative, portraying the poor and marginalised as a threat to society. During his 2024 campaign in Budapest, candidate David Vitézy proposed increasing the powers of security staff on public transport and allowing citizens to report homeless people who ‘emit a strong odour’.³² Although he was defeated at the polls, the campaign significantly reinforced prejudice against homeless individuals.

In Italy, Giorgia Meloni announced that she had ‘declared a war on illegal occupations’.³³ As early as 2023, the then Minister of the Interior, Matteo Piantedosi, coordinated major eviction operations of occupied social housing in cooperation with public housing authorities. These actions were justified by rhetoric denouncing the alleged ‘grip’ of families labelled ‘criminal’ on housing that a segment of the Italian population supposedly needed.

According to Italian authorities, 320,000 families are on waiting lists for social housing, though some advocacy estimates put the figure at twice that, and 1.7 million Italians reportedly spend more than 30% of their income on housing. Federcasa, the association of housing managers, estimates that 200,000 new homes will need to be built over the next fifteen years to meet demand. While the unauthorised occupation of

long-abandoned social housing is a genuine issue, advocacy groups blame public authorities, noting that many units remain empty and in very poor condition because managers lack the resources to maintain or renovate them. In this context, severely disadvantaged families have moved in, sometimes believing they were renting from private landlords, and it is this entire group that the government now seeks to evict. Associations also criticise the lack of transparency in allocations and the mismanagement of public agencies, but rather than addressing these structural dysfunctions, the government has favoured a securitised communication strategy, evicting families who often have no alternative housing.³⁴

This repressive approach forms part of a broader legislative framework. Through its highly controversial DDL 1660 bill on internal security,³⁵ Italy has also introduced a ‘crime of solidarity’, imposing potential prison sentences of up to seven years on individuals assisting migrants in occupying vacant buildings.³⁶

Along the same lines, in France, the Rassemblement National actively supported the Kasbarian-Bergé bill, which seeks to toughen criminal penalties against squatters and drastically reduce the rights of tenants in arrears. People in difficulty, whether occupying vacant buildings or remaining in their homes despite unpaid rent, are portrayed as criminals taking advantage of distressed landlords.

Across the Atlantic, Donald Trump promised to tackle homelessness ‘by force’. He declared his intention to ‘save American cities from the scourge of the homeless, the drug addicted and the mentally disturbed’,³⁷ targeting Housing First programmes. These are to be replaced by a plan of forced treatment, accompanied by drastic cuts to social housing construction. The

32. [Link broken](#)

33. Sina Y. (2023) ‘La “guerra” del governo Meloni agli alloggi occupati fa paura ai poveri’, [lavalibera](#), 28 February.

34. Sina Y. (2023) ‘La “guerra” del governo Meloni agli alloggi occupati fa paura ai poveri’, [lavalibera](#), 28 February.

35. [Ligue des droits de l’Homme \(2025\) ‘Appel urgent à lutter contre le recul démocratique, la détérioration de l’espace civique et de l’Etat de droit en Italie’](#), LDH, 25 May.

36. [USB \(2024\) ‘Piano Casa Italia? Sul diritto alla casa non accettiamo prese in giro’](#), USB, 29 November.

37. [Link inaccessible](#)

plan envisages the creation of encampments on federal land, where homeless individuals would be confined, while those with mental health or addiction problems would be sent to psychiatric hospitals.³⁸ This approach relies on compulsory sobriety and treating mental health as the primary response to the extreme distress of such households and is accompanied by an openly punitive discourse towards homeless people.

Beyond the risk of increasing homelessness, the withdrawal of housing policies and the rise in criminalisation and discrimination against people facing housing exclusion have serious consequences. They push individuals into a cycle that leads to greater marginalisation. This approach also affects society as a whole, generating significant costs in areas such as health and justice.³⁹

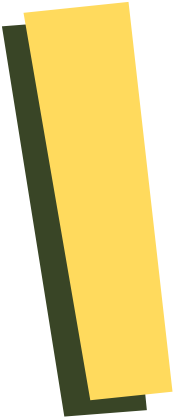


38. [Schneid, R. \(2024\) 'What Trump's Win Could Mean for Housing', Time, 14 November.](#)

39. [Fondation pour le logement des défavorisés \(2024\) 'Sans-abri, non coupable !', Fondation pour le logement des défavorisés, 19 December.](#)

PART II

DISMANTLING THE WELFARE STATE



In the name of budgetary savings, far-right parties across the board have implemented historic cuts, targeting social policies in particular, sometimes to make way for tax breaks for the wealthiest households. Where these policies have been in place for several years, poverty has reached record levels.

Upon taking office in Italy in 2022, the government decided to dismantle the universal basic income⁴⁰ introduced in 2019, which had guaranteed a minimum income of around €500 for anyone in need. This measure had significantly reduced poverty. However, unemployment remained high and it was on this basis that the government chose to amend the law. From 2024 onwards, only those facing particular difficulties in accessing employment, such as people with disabilities or older adults, continued to receive the minimum income. For working-age individuals, the benefit was reduced to €350, granted only on condition of participating in a return-to-work programme, and limited to a maximum of 12 months. Beyond this period, those deemed capable of working are no longer entitled to any financial support.

‘The only purpose of abolishing the reddito di cittadinanza is to send a clear message to the poor. You are given no support and will have to accept any kind of job, regardless of the pay’, points out sociologist Enrica Morlicchio, professor at the University of Naples Federico II and an expert on poverty.⁴¹

The only measure implemented, the ‘Dedicata a te’ (‘dedicated to you’) card, allows low-income households to purchase food and has been refinanced for 2025 to the tune of €500 million.

While this support provides assistance to the poorest households, civil society organisations lament that no additional support, such as social services or guidance, is provided for those benefiting from it.

Established in 2013, Italy’s Fondo per gli inquilini morosi incolpevoli (fund for tenants in arrears through no fault of their own) and the rent assistance fund aim to support the most vulnerable families who are struggling to pay their rent. In 2022, the government abolished this aid, leaving thousands of families in need. It was ultimately reinstated through a centrist amendment to the 2025 Finance Act, with €10 million allocated for 2025 and €20 million for 2026.

These measures, which deprive precarious households of the support they need, have undoubtedly contributed to a historic rise in poverty in Italy. According to the latest annual report from ISTAT, the Italian National Institute of Statistics, absolute poverty now affects 9.8% of the population, up 3% since 2014, while inequalities have widened.

Finland is facing similar challenges, as health and social welfare sectors, including housing, are targeted for budget cuts that will affect the poorest households. ‘The new government wants to reduce public spending by €4 billion, more than half of which will come from health and social services’, says Minna van Gerven, Professor of Social Policy at the University of Helsinki.⁴² Once again, the consequences are severe for the worst-off and have led to an increase in homelessness over the past two years.

In Belgium, Bart De Wever’s programme appears to follow a similar approach with the new government quickly implementing significant budget cuts. These reductions have mainly targeted the health sector, depriving municipal health centres of sufficient resources to carry out preventive actions effectively. In addition, after a heated debate between the coalition and the opposition party,

40. Garside B. (2023) ‘Italy’s new anti-poverty scheme sparks concerns in Brussels’, Euractiv, 4 September.

41. Campos A. and Ludwig S. (2024) ‘Italie : prendre aux pauvres pour donner aux riches’, Alternatives Économiques, February, pp. 50–51.

42. Olsen M. (2024) ‘Finland introduces social security cuts despite human rights warnings’, Courthouse News Service, 9 MARCH.

substantial cuts were also decided in the areas of education and scientific research.⁴³

The government's programme would abolish most tax deductions and credits, including the tax credit on unemployment benefits, while increasing low wages and reducing employers' contributions. Its stated aim is to create a €500 gap between the income of those in work and those receiving benefits in order to 'boost the economy and purchasing power'. To this end, the De Wever government plans to 'increase the responsibility' of welfare recipients by capping benefits and allowing financial support to be converted into 'in-kind assistance'. The distributing body could, for example, decide to use the individual's minimum income to pay bills or cover school supplies 'where it is deemed necessary'.⁴⁴

In the Netherlands, cuts also affect international cooperation, with reductions in both foreign aid and support for civil society organisations operating domestically. Beyond shrinking the budget, access to funding is set to become more restrictive, as the government aims to make associations less 'dependent on the state'. Under the new framework, organisations will need to generate at least 50% of their own income to qualify for public funding, compared with 25% at present.⁴⁵

Poland was also criticised by civil society organisations on this issue, as the PiS by creating a National Freedom Institute, took control of the allocation of public funding to civil society organisations,⁴⁶ with subsidies primarily directed towards groups supporting the party.

Across the Atlantic, President Trump ordered the suspension of all federal grants in the early days of his term, bringing many ongoing social projects in

the country to a halt. At the same time, the House of Representatives adopted a budget resolution outlining tax cuts worth \$4.5 trillion over ten years for the wealthiest, financed by higher taxes on the rest of the population and cuts to Medicaid, the health insurance programme for the worst-off.⁴⁷ Adopted in July 2025, the plan represented, according to New York representative Hakeem Jeffries, 'the largest cut to Medicaid in American history'.⁴⁸

In line with a traditionalist vision of society, some parties, notably in Italy and previously in Poland, have also pursued social policies aimed at encouraging higher birth rates. At the end of 2024, the Italian government adopted its 2025 budget, boosting family support, including a 'baby bonus' providing €1,000 to families with a taxable income below €40,000.

Parental leave, which had been improved in 2022, has been maintained and further expanded. The number of dependent family members is also taken into account in calculating tax deductions, with larger families benefiting from greater tax relief. Poland under the PiS party also pursued an ambitious family policy through its 'Family 500+' programme. The scheme, which provides an allowance for each child as well as various forms of support such as school and housing assistance, proved highly popular, particularly among the country's most disadvantaged. It contributed to a reduction in poverty between 2017 and 2018 but did not achieve the expected impact on birth rates. While the assistance helped some families improve their daily lives, it also contributed to significant inflation. As a result, by 2023, both poverty and birth rates had returned to pre-programme levels.

43. Hoger Onderwijs Persbureau (2024) 'Cuts to education and research go ahead: more than half remains in place', *Vox*, 12 December.

44. RTBF (2025) 'Voici toutes les mesures décidées par le nouveau gouvernement de Bart De Wever', RTBF 1 February.

45. Rijksoverheid (2024) 'Eerste bezuinigingen ontwikkelingshulp bekend: subsidies ngo's gaan op de schop', Rijksoverheid, 11 November.

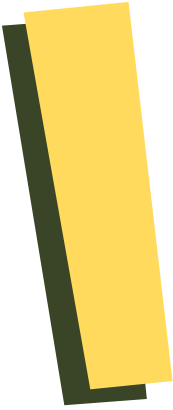
46. Day J. (2017) 'Poland Seizes Control of Civil Society Funding', *Liberties*, 13 December.

47. Agence France-Presse (2025) 'Le Congrès américain ouvre la voie au financement du programme de Trump', *Le Devoir*, 25 February.

48. Agence France-Presse (2025) 'Le Congrès américain ouvre la voie au financement du programme de Donald Trump', *L'Opinion*, 25 February.

PART III

OVERTLY ANTI-IMMIGRATION POLICIES



Migration is at the centre of far-right policies in Europe and the United States. Designated as responsible for all of society's ills, exiled people are rejected, their meagre means of subsistence minimised and those denied residency status are criminalised. Yet, faced with labour shortages and under pressure from employers, a government such as Giorgia Meloni's has had no choice but to allow the entry of foreign workers.

Yet, the Italian prime minister has pursued an intensive policy against illegal immigration for several years, expanding border outsourcing measures. Italy, in particular, has reached agreements with Tunisia to carry out checks before people in exile reach the continent. It has also established detention centres under Italian law in Albania, housing refugees rescued in Italian waters while their asylum claims are processed, although the Rome court has rejected the legality of this practice. Moreover, the Italian government has attempted, without success, to establish a link between sea rescue organisations and smuggling networks. Unable to ban them, it systematically redirects rescue ships to ports far from the affected coasts to hinder their operations – a policy has led to a reduction in the number of people arriving on Italian shores. However, this decrease has only shifted crossings to other, less safe routes into Europe and has come at the expense of Mediterranean sea rescues, where the death toll has risen dramatically.

According to the 'Missing Migrants' project run by the International Organization for Migration, the annual number of migrant deaths and disappearances across the Mediterranean rose from 2,048 in 2021 to 2,411 in 2022, reaching 3,041 by the end of 2023.

Yet, like her European counterparts, Meloni faces the realities of labour shortages. Under pressure from businesses and economic needs, she agreed in 2023 to facilitate access for foreign workers, allowing the legal entry of 452,000 people between 2023 and 2025. A new decree signed in July 2025 further authorises the entry of 500,000 people between 2026 and 2028.

While the Italian prime minister permits the entry of workers, the treatment of asylum seekers remains particularly harsh. In September 2023, a measure was adopted requiring rejected asylum seekers to pay €5,000 to cover accommodation and subsistence costs during the appeals process and, in the case of final rejection, for repatriation, in order to avoid detention. Described as a ransom, the measure was widely criticised by the opposition, which accused the government of filling state coffers 'at the expense of and on the suffering of migrants'.⁴⁹

In the Netherlands, with the rise of far-right ideas in political debate as early as 2023, the legislative campaign focused on the link between migration and the housing crisis. Then-Prime Minister Hugo De Jonge stated that 'demand [for housing] is increasing more sharply than expected, primarily due to migration'.⁵⁰

Despite hosting relatively few asylum seekers in 2022 (32,000 in 2024, compared with ten times that number in Germany, for example),

49. InfoMigrants (2023) 'Italie : pour éviter la rétention, les demandeurs d'asile en recours devront déboursier 5 000 euros', [InfoMigrants](#), 23 September.

50. Rioux C. (2024) 'Crise du logement et immigration, un mélange explosif aux Pays-Bas', [Le Devoir](#), 9 MARCH.

the four-party Dutch cabinet committed to establishing ‘the strictest asylum regime possible’ to curb irregular migration. The government announced that it would seek an exemption from European Commission rules on asylum and migration.

During the October 2025 legislative campaign, Geert Wilders promoted border closures, the return of Syrian refugees to their home country, the criminalisation of assistance to undocumented migrants and the closure of asylum reception centres.

Sweden has also seen the rise of the far right and is no longer among the most generous European countries in terms of asylum reception. Following the formation of a new government in 2022 – a coalition of traditional right-wing and far-right parties – leaders announced in 2023 their aim to make Sweden ‘the least attractive country in Europe’.⁵¹ The new majority quickly tightened conditions for residence permits and family reunification: applicants must now have lived in Sweden for eight years, not have received social benefits for more than six months over the past three years and maintain a ‘decent and honest’ life to be eligible for a permit.

In May 2024, a government-backed bill would have required public officials to report any undocumented migrants they encountered in the course of their work. Public-sector employees – including teachers, doctors, healthcare workers and librarians – protested, invoking their right to ‘civil disobedience’. Although the government eventually withdrew the proposal, civil society organisations argued that the damage had already been done, creating fear among affected individuals and undermining trust in public institutions and civil society. Belgium’s new government,⁵² like its European counterparts, has advocated for a stricter European Asylum Pact.

It plans to toughen migration policy by making reception conditions more restrictive. For example, the government has announced that authorities could gain access to asylum seekers’ phones to verify their accounts. If an applicant refuses to share this information, their claim could be automatically rejected. Asylum seekers will now be accommodated in collective centres, with hotel or individual housing no longer permitted. The government agreement also allows the Foreigners’ Office, together with the police, to access the homes of people staying in Belgium irregularly in order to carry out expulsions. Finally, the fees for acquiring Belgian nationality are set to rise from €150 to €1,000.

For the first time in Europe, Austria – where the FPÖ won the last legislative elections – has decided to suspend family reunification for migrants. It is now lobbying Brussels to prevent any asylum applications on EU soil, favouring border externalisation over the dignified reception of migrants.⁵³

These policies are having a strong influence on European migration measures. In December 2025, the EU Council adopted its position on a proposed Return Regulation, the EU’s flagship initiative to intensify the detention of immigrants and the deportation of undocumented migrants, including to non-EU countries. The Council’s stance reflects the growing influence of far-right policies across Europe. For example, it suggests granting the police the authority to search private spaces to enforce expulsions, including the homes of citizens suspected of harbouring migrants, as well as offices and accommodation centres run by associations. It also seeks to broaden the grounds for detention, including lack of family ties, engagement in informal work and insufficient means of subsistence, thereby effectively criminalising poverty and homelessness. While the text still needs to be

51. Hivert A.-F. (2023) ‘Sweden wants to become “the least attractive country in Europe” to deter asylum seekers’, *Le Monde*, 25 January.

52. RTBF (2025) ‘Voici toutes les mesures décidées par le nouveau gouvernement de Bart De Wever’, *RTBF Info*, 1 February.

53. Europe 1 (2018) ‘Migrants : l’Autriche fait des propositions extrêmes’, *Europe 1*, 5 July.

debated, notably in the European Parliament, it raises serious concerns about the erosion of fundamental rights in Europe.⁵⁴

These measures, targeting exiled people often in extremely vulnerable situations, will do nothing to resolve the housing crisis and will undoubtedly have the effect of rendering invisible those who do not meet the criteria to remain legally in the countries concerned. In fact, uncertain legal status and the inability of individuals to obtain residence rights only generate and worsen

hardship and housing exclusion.⁵⁵ People have no choice but to turn, where possible, to emergency accommodation centres, which are now overwhelmed, or to fall prey to unscrupulous landlords who exploit their vulnerability by charging exorbitant rents for substandard housing. Under these conditions, how can one fail to foresee a surge in homelessness across Europe?



54. Carta S. (2025) 'Return Regulation: JHA Council endorses police raids of private homes to search for migrants', PICUM, 8 December.

55. Portefaix P. (2021) 'Fabrique des personnes "sans-papiers", fabrique des mal-logés', Fondation pour le logement des défavorisés, 8 December.

CONCLUSION

The rise of the far right to power, in an increasing number of countries across Europe and internationally, poses a real danger to those facing housing exclusion and most at risk. Yet the implications extend far beyond this. The public policies they implement do not target those most in need. On the contrary, they attack the entire social policy framework, slash public service budgets indiscriminately and are accompanied by inhumane migration policies that undermine fundamental rights and efforts to reduce inequality.

In Finland, the far-right government is pursuing a comprehensive reform of labour law and the social protection system. In this context, it passed a measure in December 2023 known as the 'Workplace Peace' law, aimed at restricting the right to strike. The law now limits strikes classified as 'political', meaning those aimed at challenging government reforms. It also restricts work stoppages to 24 hours in the event of a strike, increases financial penalties for social movements deemed illegal, and reduces the mediation powers of the National Conciliation Institute during industrial disputes.⁵⁶

In Italy, the Interior Security Law also introduces harsher penalties for civil society actions, restrictions on the right to protest, and the possibility of revoking citizenship from naturalised individuals in the event of a crime.⁵⁷ In Slovakia, dismissals within the police, judiciary and media have increased, and a recent law similarly restricts the right to protest.

At the same time, several far-right governments, including those in Italy, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia, have taken control of major media outlets to disseminate government ideas at the expense of independent journalism and press freedom.

In many countries, such as Poland and Hungary, the rights of women⁵⁸ and LGBTI+ people are also under attack.

The rise of the far right to power is therefore a cause for concern on multiple fronts. Beyond economic choices and populist arguments, it reflects a broader process of institutional dismantling, undermining public freedoms and even challenging the rule of law.

56. Hivert A.-F. (2024) 'Finnish protesters rally against attacks on the social model and the right to strike', *Le Monde*, 4 February.

57. Lecourbe M. (2024) 'DDL 1660 : en Italie, le Sénat examine une loi ultra-répressive pour criminaliser les mobilisations', *Révolution Permanente*, 7 October.

58. Knaebel R. (2019) 'En Pologne, le gouvernement ultra-conservateur attaque sans relâche les droits des femmes', *Bastat*, 22 May.



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