Election 2019 Briefing

#housingpledge2019 - *Seeking Four Key Pledges*

Irish Council for Social Housing

A Housing System for All

The housing crisis continues to deepen with many marginalised and lower income households suffering most acutely. The Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH) is asking all political parties and candidates to ensure that *access to affordable, good quality, secure accommodation for all households is a central focus for Election 2019.*

The ICSH propose a number of commitments, which we are asking parties and candidates to pledge to support as part of their election campaigns. The role of housing associations (also known as approved housing bodies) in delivering social housing in Ireland is growing, reflecting the active role of housing associations in the housing systems of our European neighbours.

Affordable housing is as central an issue for communities in Ireland as it is for those living across Europe. Housing is both a local and European issue, as it has become an overwhelming expenditure for households, disproportionally hitting poorer households harder. Local and European elected members have a unique ability to support and develop this essential part of our response to the housing crisis and we are calling on candidates to pledge their support to the following key ask.

	Local Election Pledges	**European Election Pledges**
① Delivery	Pledge to work with housing associations to provide homes in partnership with housing authorities through the following measures: • Housing associations will work with the local authority in delivering housing through all delivery streams. • Ensure *Housing First* is prioritised to combat the growing problem of homelessness. • Seek to ensure at least 20% social and affordable housing under Part V.	Improve European policies to promote a fairer housing policy. The European Commission should encourage member states to use flexibility mechanisms within the Stability and Growth Pact, in order to invest in housing and social infrastructures. EU funding programmes and regional funds to support capacity building, including capacity building in renewable energy for social and affordable housing providers.
② Choice in Housing Options	• Develop and resource assisted independent living options for older persons and people with disabilities. • Support an affordable and cost rental model to ensure access to housing for all income groups that are excluded from the housing market. • Expand choice based letting options to include housing association tenancies to improve the speed of nominations and ensure parity with local authority tenancies.	Support the reversal of the Eurostat classification of housing associations to their prior status as Non-Profit Institutions Serving Households (NPISH), i.e. 'Off-balance sheet'. State aid rules for social housing should allow for more flexibility, i.e. allowing social housing providers to respond to local needs by enabling social and affordable housing to be defined within the scope of 'services of general economic interest', where there is no supply from the private market addressing low- and moderate- income households.

③ **Land & Supply**	Utilise state land for the delivery of social and affordable rental housing. Strengthen the partnership with housing associations and local councils by supporting the transfer of sites/developments in council ownership to housing associations for the much-needed delivery of social and affordable housing. Ensure the planning system provides one- and two-bed homes in quality developments to reflect people's housing needs.	European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) should continue to support social and affordable housing, with the financial commitment reflecting the scale of the problem. Utilise reduced VAT rates for social housing within the scope of the current EU VAT directive. Support enhanced EU urban and social cohesion programmes to respond to integrated housing needs with health and communication requirements in line with greater urbanisation.
④ Partnership	Promote joint ventures between housing associations and housing authorities including stock transfer and management programmes. Encourage more widespread use of Part 8 between local authorities and housing associations.	The European Pillar of Social Rights proclaims the right to access social housing for those in need and should be the guideline for EU economic and fiscal policies. Ensure homelessness is an EU priority with financial frameworks put in place to tackle homelessness.

The Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH) is the national representative federation for non-profit housing associations with over 270 members. Housing associations provide over 35,000 homes for older people, people on low incomes, people with disabilities and formerly homeless persons. The ICSH believe housing associations and local authorities can work in partnership to maximise the supply of permanent social housing to create an expanded and more flexible stock of social housing.

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