

Memorandum from the High Authority on housing issues (12 October 1953)

Caption: Sent to Jean Monnet, President of the ECSC High Authority, this memorandum from the three working parties on housing shortages summarises the situation and the means to counter the housing shortage for manual workers in the six Member States.

Source: Fondation Jean Monnet pour l'Europe, [s.l.]. Archives Jean Monnet. Fonds AMH. 24/1/2. Haute Autorité de la Communauté européenne du charbon et de l'acier, Luxembourg. 22 Oct 1953, N° 11683. 7456/f.

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Memorandum from the High Authority on housing issues (Luxembourg, 12 October 1953)

Dear Mr President,

After several months of study, the chairmen of the three working parties entrusted with looking into housing problems hereby submit to you a memorandum setting down their common concerns.

They ask you to consider this document as an expression of their support for the development of an active housing policy, with the full agreement of the High Authority.

Yours faithfully,

J. Ernst,
Chairman of the Working Party on Administrative Methods
I. Smets,
Chairman of the Working Party on Technical Problems
A. Spinetta,
Chairman of the Working Party on Requirements

Mr Jean Monnet,
President of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community

Luxembourg

Memorandum

After several months of studying the housing problem, we feel the time has come to inform the High Authority of our findings and to draw its attention to the conditions under which this work could be pursued.

A survey, carried out under auspices of the *Sous-Commission des Maisons Ouvrières* [Workers' Housing Subcommittee], helped to define the general housing needs in the coal and steel industries. Three groups of experts then continued the studies undertaken in the area of requirements, technical problems and administrative methods.

Requirements

Precise information was sought on the nature of the requirements. Simple criteria, applicable to the six Member States, were defined so that a clearer distinction might be drawn between the housing units that need to be built, existing but inadequate housing and housing that is too distant to be of practical use.

Additional surveys, based, where appropriate, on the results of previous surveys and conducted in the manner deemed most appropriate for each of the six countries, are now under way, with a view to quantifying more precisely the various categories of requirements and to breaking them down by region or economic area.

Technical Problems

We studied the technical conditions that could best support construction programmes. We also submitted conclusions, in particular for the use of steel in construction.

Administrative Methods

In addition, we studied the relationship to be established between the High Authority and the agencies entrusted with implementing housing programmes, and we submitted a number of proposals.

We conducted all these studies and submitted our proposals without having put forward any particular hypothesis on the nature or scale of the contribution that the High Authority might make to the funding of the housing construction programmes.

It is not surprising that, on this point, the High Authority was circumspect, as funding decisions in this area are contingent upon overall economic targets.

The upshot is that the work of the experts remains theoretical until such time as the investment hypotheses have been defined. These hypotheses, accompanied by financing arrangements, will provide the real setting for implementing the methods advocated by the experts.

The solutions for meeting requirements, finding the best use of techniques or setting up administrative relations will depend on the kind of investment that is committed and its geographical allocation.

During its work, the group dealing with requirements decided to draw a distinction between, on the one hand, technical requirements that must be met in order to create new production capacity or expand existing capacity and, on the other, social requirements that tie in directly with improvements in existing plants whose shortcomings are an obstacle to greater productivity.

In drawing this distinction, the experts did not intend to establish a hierarchy of requirements. They believe that, as a general rule, it is not possible to separate social requirements from technical ones. But, here again, where to draw the line between the two may be decided only within a specific programme which is itself based on particular development goals.

In conclusion, we should like to draw the attention of the High Authority to the importance of continuity in housing. Naturally, we are not asking the High Authority to resolve the housing crisis that is plaguing Europe. The various countries concerned are well aware of their responsibilities in this area.

However, the contribution of the High Authority can be of great help in solving the housing problem if it takes sustained action over several years.

In fact, continuity is the key to achieving efficient and profitable construction. Ongoing financing helps to ensure continuity in employment and techniques and is the best way to bring down costs and, at the same time, meet needs quickly.

These are the leading concerns that we feel would justify the development of an active housing policy.