

Housing for all: an unfulfilled right

In 2025, Portugal celebrates the 50th anniversary of its Constitution. A historic moment that should serve not only to commemorate the past, but above all to reflect on the present and plan for the future. Among many fundamental rights, the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic enshrines the right to housing in Article 65. This article states unequivocally **that everyone has the right to decent housing**.

Now, five decades on, we have to ask: is this right really being guaranteed? Unfortunately, the answer is no. Portugal, as is well known, is currently facing one of its most serious housing crises. Access to housing has become a structural problem, cutting across various sections of the population: from the youngest to middle-class families, from the self-employed to pensioners. What should be a guaranteed right has become, in practice, almost an endangered right that is difficult to access.

I've been warning: reality cannot be ignored. The supply of housing, especially at affordable prices, is clearly insufficient to meet demand. Families feel excluded from urban centres, forced to live further and further away from their workplaces and to bear the increasing costs of mobility and loss of quality of life. Young people, even those with training and jobs, find themselves unable to leave their parents' home or start an independent life project.

This is the worrying scenario in Portugal, as we well know, but it is also in this context that I have been insistently warning of the need for a paradigm shift. There is no way to solve the housing crisis without a significant increase in supply. And for this to happen, it is essential to involve all the players in the sector, including private investment, in a constructive, collaborative way and with a long-term vision.

We can no longer feed a false dichotomy between state and market, between public and private. Affordable housing is not built with rhetoric, it is built with investment, planning, legislative stability and confidence. Developers and investors are willing to contribute concrete, sustainable and socially responsible solutions. But to do this they need a predictable legal and fiscal framework, less bureaucracy and a political discourse that recognises their positive role in the housing ecosystem.

It is essential to rethink urban planning models, make licensing easier, encourage long-term rentals, mobilise public assets for housing projects and, above all, promote effective public-private partnerships. We need consistent and continuous policies that don't change with each political cycle, but are the result of a national strategy with clear and measurable objectives.

The 50th anniversary of the Constitution must be a turning point. It's not enough to reaffirm rights on paper - it's urgent to fulfil them in practice. The right to decent housing is one of the pillars of building a society and of human dignity. Failing to guarantee it is failing the next generations and the founding principles of our democracy.

Property developers and investors want to and can be part of the solution. With a sense of mission, with proposals, with responsibility. Because we believe that everyone should have the right to live in dignity. And because we believe that private investment, when well organised, can and must be a transformative force in making this right a reality.

What is missing before we can move forward with building the foundations of this fundamental right?