

FROM AIRBNB TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING: WE NEED A NEW SHORT-TERM RENTALS REGULATION FOR PEOPLE, NOT FOR PROFIT

DECLARATION OF THE PES GROUP IN THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

"No more Airbnb in my city in 2028... Our fight today is to guarantee every citizen's right to stay in our cities"

Jaume Collboni, CoR rapporteur on the role of cities and regions in the future European Affordable Housing Plan

Once upon a time, Airbnb was cool. Initially indeed, short-terms rentals (STR) symbolized the promise of a collaborative economy where travelers could experience authentic local life and homeowners could supplement their income by occasionally hosting visitors in their own place. Unfortunately, that promise is now broken and the fairy tale is over. Short-term rentals (STR) have evolved into a highly commercialized industry dominated by professional operators managing multiple properties. The result? Residents pushed out from their neighborhood, cities losing their identity, and a housing crisis spreading all over Europe.

The rapid and uneven expansion of STR has indeed durably transformed housing in urban and rural areas, including islands and mountainous areas across Europe. The numbers speak for themselves: in 2023, guests spent 719 million nights in short-term rental accommodation in the EU, booked via Airbnb, Booking, Expedia Group or TripAdvisor¹. This corresponds to a 20.5% increase compared with 2022. The evidence is clear: STR drive up rents and reduce housing availability. Studies confirm a direct link between rising Airbnb density and soaring rental prices². This has a direct impact on people's lives: in Madrid alone, the historic city center has lost 15,000 residents since 2005³.

But the damage goes beyond affordability. Unregulated STR erode the fabric of communities, displacing long-term residents, bankrupting local shops, and fueling conflicts over public space: noise, over-tourism, and the slow death of neighborhood life.

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20240403-1>

² Dr. Petrus te Braak, Prof. Pieter-Paul Verhaeghe, Policy Proposals for Regulating the Short-Term Rental Market: Towards a Balanced Housing Market in Brussels, 2024, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, p. 7.

³ T. Aguilera, F. Artioli, C. Colomb, Explaining the diversity of policy responses to platform-mediated short-term rentals in European cities: A comparison of Barcelona, Paris and Milan, Environment and Planning A, 2021, 53 (7), p. 12.



The European socialist family led the charge, pushing the European Commission to finally act. The regulation (EU) 2024/1028 on data collection and sharing relating to STR services is a start but it falls short of expectations. Gaps remain: unreliable host declarations, weak platform checks, patchy data, and enforcement deadlocks (especially when platforms operate outside local jurisdiction).

For this reason, the PES Group in the European Committee of the Regions, in its External Meeting in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, on 15 January 2026, demands stronger action. As the European Union will negotiate a new regulation on STR alongside the European Affordable Housing Plan, we set out our priorities.

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OUR DEMANDS:

Overarching principle:

Housing is a human right and a public good, and the new short-term rental regulation must prioritize affordable housing and livable neighborhoods over commercial interests.

Key Demand:

The EU must respect and empower local and regional competence to regulate short-term rental regulation.

1. Prior authorization for registration systems

Current Issue: The EU STR Regulation allows for automatic issuance of registration numbers without prior verification, enabling fraud and illegal listings.

Proposal: The PES Group in the CoR demands the right to verify registration data **before** issuing numbers, ensuring only compliant listings are registered. This would prevent false declarations and improve enforcement efficiency.

Key Demand: The new system put in place would replace **self-registration** by host by **prior authorization procedure** by local or regional authorities, when the registration number is compulsory.

2. Night caps

Context: Many cities use “night caps” (maximum nights per year a unit can be rented as STR) to balance tourism and housing availability.

Proposal: The PES Group in the CoR supports locally tailored night caps, recognizing that one-size-fits-all rules are ineffective due to diverse housing markets and tourism pressures.

Key Demand: Night caps should be set by local/regional authorities based on their specific needs, not standardized at the EU level.

3. Targeted bans and/or zoning

Context: Some cities need to ban STR in certain areas (e.g., city centers, residential neighborhoods) to protect housing stock and livability.

Proposal: The PES Group in the CoR insists on the right of local authorities to impose bans or zoning restrictions for STR, in line with the principle of subsidiarity and public interest (e.g., housing affordability, neighborhood cohesion).

Key Demand: EU and national laws must respect and enable these local bans/zoning rules, and platforms must **automatically** enforce them by delisting non-compliant properties.

4. Reliability of data

Current Issues:

1. Host self-declaration is unreliable; hosts can falsely claim exemption from registration.
2. Platforms often fail to check if the data transmitted is accurate, hindering enforcement.

Proposals:

1. For the self-registration of the host, the online interface should be organized in a way that requires hosts to enter the corresponding registration number in case the unit offered for short-term rental is located in an area where a registration procedure has been established or applies.
2. Platforms must cross-check host declarations with official registration areas and require registration numbers where applicable. They must also provide all booking data (including for unregistered listings) in registration areas, with precise addresses (number, letterbox number for instance) and URLs. In particular, they should perform random checks on 25% of listings to detect false declarations or misuse of registration numbers. To increase transparency for the so-called "short-stay accommodation" (rentals between a few weeks until one year) and fight against regulation avoidance, furnished apartments rented for up to one year (e.g., for business/study) must be included in data sharing, as they often bypass STR regulations.

Key Demand: Data must be objectively verifiable, not based on host self-declarations and shared in a standardized, machine-readable format. Platforms should check it

beyond "reasonable efforts to randomly check on a regular basis" (the current text of the regulation).

5. Cross-border enforcement and platform accountability

Current Issue: Platforms often resist data sharing or delisting illegal ads, citing legal seats in other Member States.

Proposal:

1. Stronger penalties for non-compliance should be applied across borders.
2. National governments must ensure Single Digital Entry Points (SDEPs) are operational and aligned with local registration systems. This multilevel governance is paramount to obtain responses.
3. Hosts declaring exemption from registration should be treated as "traders" under the Digital Services Act, with platforms required to publish their contact and registration details.

Key demand: Real cross-border enforcement should be implemented at European level.

6. Empowering local and regional authorities:

Current situation: Local and regional authorities fear regulating STR nowadays because of a constant risk of litigation by big platforms in the name of the EU law and because of Member States' indifference or weak EU oversight.

Proposal: The European Parliament should monitor closely if Member States are or are not complying with the EU law (in regards of the European Court of Justice jurisprudence for instance).

Key demand: The European Parliament should exert its role of scrutinizing the European Commission's enforcement action to ensure accurate implementation of the EU law.