

Question for written answer E-004238/2026
to the Commission
Rule 144
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Subject: Need to modify housing stress criteria and take better account of island-related challenges in the new affordable housing act

The affordable housing act provides a framework for national and local authorities to enforce measures to address the housing crisis in areas under the greatest stress. However, in order to proceed with such measures, they will have to demonstrate that short-term rentals have placed a substantial burden on the availability or affordability of housing in an area for at least three years prior, and that their response is targeted, necessary and proportionate.

The proposal's explanatory memorandum and impact assessment do not provide an empirical or legal foundation to justify the three-year criterion – a requirement that has been met with backlash as it may increase the burden of proof for local and regional authorities and hinder preventive action¹.

What is more, although the act recognises the severity of the crisis in island areas, it seemingly fails to account for their particularities². The NUTS2/NUTS3 indicators may obscure seasonal variation and discrepancies between islands³.

In view of this:

1. What was the basis for the three-year criterion, and how does the Commission respond to the criticism that this condition delays preventive action?
2. How did it assess, in the context of island-proofing, whether small island municipalities have sufficient data to demonstrate the required causal link over a three-year period?
3. Does it intend to support the integration of insularity, seasonality and tourism intensity into the criteria for determining housing stress?

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¹ According to the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, this requirement increases the burden of proof and limits the locally tailored and innovative solutions needed by local and regional authorities, making it difficult for them to act proactively when housing stress arises.

² Contrary to the new European strategy for islands with regard to island-proofing and the territorial impact assessment process.

³ Small island municipalities often lack the capacity to collect and analyse housing data, and yet the act requires multiannual causal evidence prior to any intervention. This narrow approach runs the risk of overlooking the broader picture. Housing stress takes many forms and cannot always be captured by a single affordability index. Stress may come from tourism, housing supply shortages, demographic changes, constraints on land availability or permitting procedures, among other factors.