

(English version)

Question for written answer E-000801/26
to the Commission
Kathleen Van Brempt (S&D), Mohammed Chahim (S&D)
(25 February 2026)

Subject: Cross-border exploitation and substandard housing of EU mobile workers

Recent events in the Belgian-Dutch border region have exposed a systemic failure in protecting EU mobile workers. On 8 March 2025, a fire broke out in a former ‘rendez-vous’ hotel in Lommel, Belgium. Although officially registered as vacant, the building housed 21 Latvian workers in appalling living conditions. They were employed by a Dutch meat-processing company but housed across the border in Belgium by a Dutch real estate agency. This is not an isolated case as similar situations have been reported involving other companies. It shows that certain actors exploit regulatory differences between Member States to circumvent housing rules and labour inspections.

1. Is the Commission aware of this practice, whereby employers or recruitment agencies house mobile workers in a different Member State to where the workers are employed in order to circumvent certain regulations or inspections, and how can the European Labour Authority help address these abuses?
2. How will the Commission’s first-ever European Affordable Housing Plan ensure that ‘affordable and quality housing’ also protects mobile workers from illegal, exploitative or employment-tied arrangements?
3. Is the Commission considering European minimum standards for mobile workers’ housing, and will it support or fund cross-border initiatives, such as the Arrondissement Information and Expertise Centres (ARIEC) in Belgium and the Euro-regional Information and Expertise Centre (EURIEC), to tackle organised crime and human trafficking linked to labour migration?

Submitted: 25.2.2026

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Mînzatu on behalf of the European Commission
(13 April 2026)

The Commission is aware of concerns related to the conditions of accommodation of posted workers as noted in the Implementation report of Directive (EU) 2018/957 ⁽¹⁾ and has suggested follow-up actions.

The cooperation established between German and Dutch authorities, also involving the European Labour Authority, shows how successful inspections can be organised in that area ⁽²⁾.

The Commission recognises that national legislation and increased attention to law enforcement on the ground constitute key elements to address these problems ⁽³⁾.

The European Affordable Housing Plan ⁽⁴⁾ puts forward actions aiming at facilitating affordable housing to most vulnerable groups. It does not particularly envisage situations like the one described by the Honourable Members in which case employers’ obligations stem from the applicable labour laws. EU law on free movement of workers ensures that mobile workers have the same rights as national workers in housing ⁽⁵⁾.

The Commission has supported the Euregional Information and Expertise Centre ⁽⁶⁾ since 2019 with grants from the EU’s Internal Security Fund — Police and, by doing so, contributes to the close cooperation of Dutch, Belgian and German authorities.

Beyond that, the Commission also supports the trade-union driven fair labour mobility EU project ⁽⁷⁾; labour conditions of people working in the domain of meat processing is one of the areas of particular attention for the project team ⁽⁸⁾.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52024DC0320>.

⁽²⁾ <https://www.landtag.nrw.de/portal/WWW/dokumentenarchiv/Dokument/MMV18-1171.pdf>.

⁽³⁾ Erol, Şerife/Thorsten Schulten (2025) Neue Arbeitswelt in der Fleischindustrie, <https://www.wsi.de/de/faust-detail.htm?produkt=HBS-009091>.

⁽⁴⁾ https://housing.ec.europa.eu/european-affordable-housing-plan_en.

⁽⁵⁾ Article 9(1) of Regulation (EU) No 492/2011 on freedom of movement for workers within the Union, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2011/492/oj/eng>.

⁽⁶⁾ <https://euriec.eu/en>.

⁽⁷⁾ <https://www.fair-labour-mobility.eu/>.

⁽⁸⁾ <https://www.faire-mobilitaet.de/fachinformationen/brancheninformationen/fleischindustrie/>.