

SOCIAL HOUSING DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION IN ALBANIA

A Review of the Existing Norms and Proposed Guidelines



Leave
No One
Behind

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Tirana, Albania
July 2019

Disclaimer

This report is commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Albania in the framework of “Leave No One Behind” programme, which is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

Opinions and views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) or of the United Nations (UN).

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1.1 ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADU (BKU)	Affordable Dwelling Unit Programme
CoE	Council of Europe
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DCM	Decision of Council of Ministers
EU	European Union
LGU	Local Government Unit
LGBTI	Lesbians, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons
LNB	Leave No One Behind
MoFE	Ministry of Finance and Economy
NHA	National Housing Authority
OSFA	Open Society Foundation for Albania
PPP	Public Private Partnership
SHR (BSQ)	Social Housing Rental Programme
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlement Programme

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2. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks for their contribution and helpful comments go to

Doris Andoni,

Estevan Ikonomi,

Eralda Cani,

Mariana Semini and

Erviola Nelaj.

3. TOR: REVIEWING AND DEFINING THE NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL HOUSES IN ALBANIA

3.1 BACKGROUND

The Leave No One Behind (LNB) Programme builds upon the vast experience of UN and UNDP in addressing social inclusion and the needs of vulnerable groups. It is supporting the implementation of the newly shaped vision of the social sector in Albania, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the country's aspirations towards EU integration. LNB avails of technical expertise and know-how of UN agencies aiming at allowing for greater impact and outreach by focusing on the municipal level and its linkage to the national level. The objective of this four-year programme (2017 – 2021) is to empower vulnerable persons and groups to have equal access to public services and opportunities, to have a voice in public decision-making affecting their lives, and to hold the duty bearers accountable. The programme's interventions are designed to:

- strengthen the vulnerable population to request and receive adequate social services from local authorities that support their social inclusion,
- help municipalities to effectively manage the provision of social services and promote social inclusion,
- support national institutions to implement their policy framework for providing social services and adequately fund social services.

The third outcome of the programme reflects its concern with anchoring the interventions at system level, i.e. to contribute to the further development and implementation of policies and laws relevant for social inclusion.

The programme's implementation is the responsibility of the four UN agencies UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women and UNFPA, whereas funding support is provided by Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC).

3.1.1 The Law “On Social Housing”

Law no. 22 “On Social Housing” was approved by the Parliament of Albania on 3 May 2018. It was drafted with UNDP assistance and expertise, as part of UNDP's contribution to furthering the *social inclusion* agenda in the country, and with CoE support availed to the Ministry of Urban Development. The law aims at creating opportunities for adequate and affordable housing for a safe, dignified and peaceful life, relying on the solvency of individuals and families in need of housing and in need of state aid. It intends to provide a tailored approach to the needs of people

with disabilities, the elderly, children and other groups, by reducing the efforts of these groups to meet their specific housing needs. The law attempts to meet the obligations of harmonisation of national and international legislation regarding the right to adequate housing which in international law is enshrined in several legal instruments.

The social housing programs foreseen in the law include:

1. *the Social Housing Rental Program, SHR (BSQ);*
2. *program to Enhance the Conditions of Existing dwellings or construction of new ones;*
3. *the Affordable Dwelling Unit program, ADU (BKU);*
4. *the Area Development program for Housing purposes;*
5. *the Temporary Shelter (accommodation) program;*
6. *the Specialized Housing program.*

Besides existing programs like BSQ and BKU, this law brought about several innovations including the creation of a *public fund for social housing*, the introduction of the meaning, role and status of the *social owner*, provision of a *points-based criteria system* of assessing the eligibility of the applicants, the *Temporary Shelter* program, the *Specialized Housing* program, and other specific obligations that the law imposes on the local governments and on the private sector contributions relevant to social housing.

In particular, the law introduces for the first time the *temporary shelter* concept which intends to address the emergency situations for housing people in need. Temporary shelters are objects or equipment that are easily assembled and dismantled and serve for temporary shelter for a term not longer than two years. Temporary shelters may be used for the accommodation of refugees, of displaced persons due to natural or man-made disasters, of displaced persons due to public or private investment and not receiving compensation, and of returned migrants and homeless people.

Relevant to this concept, the law for the first time foresees the creation of a *specialized housing program*, which comprises housing for people with special needs including the elderly, persons with disabilities, victims and potential victims of trafficking, victims of family violence, children without parental care or in state protection and who are prepared to move to independent life, juveniles from 14 to 18 or young people 18 to 21 years after the release or completion of penal justice programs and child mothers.

Currently, UNDP, through its LNB programme, is continuing to support the Government of Albania to formulate the bylaws for the implementation of the law on Social Housing. The development of the bylaws and other secondary legislation is important to ensure the clear and effective implementation of procedures and of legally supported cases established by the law itself.

3.2 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.2.1 Scope of the assignment

A working group has been created at the Ministry of Finance and Economy (MoFE), coordinated by a dedicated Unit on Social Housing, and is tasked with the preparation of all the necessary bylaws and other relevant secondary legislation to support the implementation of the Law on Social Housing. The working group is composed largely of legal and finance experts of MoFE and its dependent National Housing Authority (NHA) and of other interested parties comprising, at present, UNDP/LNB, CoE and OSFA. The support that UNDP/LNB is providing to the working group from its inception consists of high quality national technical/legal expertise in the formulation of all the necessary bylaws¹.

Among others, the working group and legal experts' preliminary assessment of the law has revealed the need to specify a set of norms and standards for the social houses that will be part of the implementation of various programs foreseen by the law. Specifically, Article 45 (point 3) of the law stipulates:

Norms and standards of affordable dwelling units, purchasing procedures from the market, evaluation and selling procedures, and criteria regarding the selling price determination process for the property of households that benefit from affordable dwelling units based on the level of income, shall be approved by decision of Council of Ministers.

Article 55 of the same law stipulates the conditions to be met by temporary accommodations, including location in safe places and provision of adequate protection from atmospheric conditions. Point 3 of this article stipulates:

The other conditions to be met by temporary shelter shall be determined by instruction of the Minister responsible for housing

Similarly, on the specialized houses, Article 58 (point 2) of the same law stipulates:

Conditions and norms of designing specialised housing shall be drafted by the relevant ministry for housing in collaboration with other relevant ministries and shall be approved through decision of the Council of Ministers.

Groups of beneficiaries, especially people with disabilities and Roma and Egyptians, have expressed concern regarding the standards applied through previous social housing programs². In 2015, the Government of Albania approved the *National Standards for Housing Design*³ prepared by the (then) Ministry of Urban Development. It is important that besides consideration for these national norms and standards, a selection of houses that will be assigned as meeting the *social housing* needs should also comply with:

- the special accessibility requirements for the “specialized houses”, which should be available for use not only by persons with disabilities, but also by other brackets of people including victims of domestic violence, children not under parental custody, etc.
- the adequacy requirements for “temporary accommodation”

¹ Currently counting 33 bylaws, of which 16 completely new Decisions of the Council of Ministers

² As documented by UNDP in its Housing Policies and Practice for Roma in Albania (2013) and Needs Assessment of Social Housing in Albania (2014) study reports

³ DCM No. 626, dated, 15.7.2015, On the Approval of Norms for Housing Design

In the framework of LNB, UNDP will be engaging a Housing Specialist (hereafter “the Consultant”) to assist the working group established by the Minister of Finance and Economy (MoFE) to carry out a comprehensive review of existing housing and construction legislation, practices and standards and information and data on the socio-economic situation of those brackets of vulnerable Albanian population that typically become or are set to become priority targets of social housing policies. The review will then inform the definition of the new norms and minimum standards for the implementation of the law. The review will look at all of the above (legislation, practices and standards, and socio-economic situation) with regard to the implementation of each of the six social housing programs⁴.

Some of the existing legislation which will be part of the review include the bylaw “On the terms, norms and standards to be met by social rental apartments, which are purchased on the market⁵”, the bylaw “On housing rates for households benefiting from social housing programs⁶” and the aforementioned bylaw⁷ “On the Approval of Norms for Housing Design” with the latter norms now part of the ALS-P-TB-1501 standard. The ‘norms and standards for social housing’ document will be part of the corresponding bylaw.

The social and economic review of the situation of those vulnerable populations prone to becoming priority targets of social housing policies will seek to extrapolate important information and data on their current status and the mid-term forecast, largely in terms of absolute and relative numbers, indices family size and composition, et cetera. The vulnerable brackets of population for the purpose of this review include, but are not limited to, Roma and Egyptians and persons with disabilities.

The comprehensively review of all four aspects (legislation, practices, standards, socio-economic situation) will inform a set of proposed norms and standards which should comply with the principles of the housing policy set in articles 3 to 10 of the Law no. 22 “On Social Housing”, mainly *affordability, adequacy and cultural adequacy*. In the course of this assignment, it is important to identify the prevailing norms and the range (minimum, average and maximum) of standards, and consequently to propose adjustments relevant to the provisions of Law no. 22, that apply to each of the following⁸:

- Minimum space per person
- Design and standards for Common Areas (incl. corridors, kitchen, living rooms, laundry, toilets and showers)
- *Norms and standards for Space design (interior: circulation space, means of escape and space requirements for people with disabilities)*
- Safety Regulations
- State of maintenance (incl. cleanliness, structural soundness, physical safety, fire hazards, natural light, ventilation and egress from all habitable areas, etc.)
- Location (incl. proximity/distance to surrounding community services and other dwelling areas)
- It is important that the review of the existing norms and standards as well as the definition of the specific standards for social houses takes consideration of the principles of Universal

4 1) the Social Housing Rental Program, SHR (BSQ); 2) program to Enhance the Conditions of Existing dwellings or construction of new ones; 3) the Affordable Dwelling Unit program, ADU (BKU); 4) the Area Development program for Housing purposes; 5) the Temporary Shelter (accommodation) program; 6) the Specialized Housing program

5 DCM No. 258, dated 28.04.2005

6 DCM No. 814, dated 03.12.2004

7 DCM No. 626, dated 15.7.2015

8 The list is purely indicative and not necessarily comprehensive

design. In particular, accessibility to the physical environment, including buildings, is required by Article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)⁹. Physical accessibility measures are of relevance for all persons with disabilities, not only those with physical impairments. They include:

- o installing ramps,
- o installing lifts,
- o constructing/adapting wheelchair-accessible bathrooms
- o providing information (incl. signposts) in Braille.

3.2.2 Duties and responsibilities

Under the supervision of the UNDP / LNB Programme Coordinator and with guidance and technical support of the Head of Housing Unit at MoFE, ***the Consultant will carry out the following main tasks:***

1. Review and analyse existing housing legislation, practices, and design standards and discuss their implication in meeting the requirements for application of the six social housing programmes foreseen by Law no. 22, with a special focus on “temporary accommodation” and “specialised houses”
2. Review the social and economic situation of vulnerable brackets of population that are prone to becoming priority targets of social housing policies, by extrapolating and analysing important information and data on their current status and the mid-term forecast, in terms of absolute and relative numbers, indices family size and composition, et cetera. The vulnerable brackets of population for the purpose of this review include, but are not limited to, Roma and Egyptians and persons with disabilities
3. Define and propose guidelines for the standards for (a) sizes for each dwelling unit, relevant to the expected number of occupants/families per each unit and (a) other requirements. This may include, to a limited extent, drafting parts of technical designs only if necessary
4. Draft reports and other relevant documents in English language for the each of the above tasks, and submit them to the Head of Housing Unit at MoFE and to the LNB focal person for this assignment, seeking comments and approval from both
5. Upon review of drafts documents and after incorporating suggestions and input as relevant, submit the final documents consisting of (a) the consolidated report on the review of existing legislation, practices, design standards, and the socio-economic situation, (b) a proposal of guidelines for standards and norms relevant to the requirements of Law no. 22, including any technical designs, if/when necessary.

⁹ CRPD Article 9 (2) (a) highlights that one important way of making the physical environment accessible is to “develop, promulgate, and monitor the implementation of minimum standards and guidelines for the accessibility of facilities and services open or provided to the public.”

3.2.3 Expected Outputs and Deliverables:

1. A Draft Narrative Report, in English language, on the *Review of Existing Design and Construction Norms and Standards in Albania*, which should:
 - Describe, analyse and discuss their implication in meeting the requirements for application of the six housing programmes foreseen by Law no. 22, with a special focus on “temporary accommodation” and “specialised houses”, and
 - Summarise, in the form of recommendations, the key sections that require adaptations and further detailed input in order to meet the requirements for the application of Law no. 22
2. A Draft Guideline, in English language, which after elaborating on the recommendations from the draft *Review of Existing Design and Construction Norms and Standards in Albania*, should consist of (a) sizes for each dwelling unit, relevant to the expected number of occupants and/or families per each unit and (a) other requirements. This may include some technical design only as/if necessary.
3. A Final Document, incorporating suggestions and input as relevant, including:
 - the Final Report on the Review carried out
 - the Final Proposed Guidelines defining the standards and norms
4. The Consultant's report comprising important observations, conclusions and recommendations for future work.

4. REVIEW OF EXISTING DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION NORMS AND STANDARDS IN ALBANIA

4.1 ANALYSIS OF THE EXISTING NORMS AND STANDARDS

4.1.1 DCM 567, 06.12.1993, On the Housing Design Norms

The DCM 567 On the Housing Design Norms, approved in 1993 is so far one of the most elaborated documents concerning the basic parameters of housing design. The DCM was abolished in 2015 and replaced with DCM 625/2015. Although it is a comprehensive document some of the norms need a critical review in order to conform the actual needs in the housing sector.

The design norms are defined and set as minimal acceptable comfort conditions for the activities in a household.

The most important norms relevant to this report are:

- Orientation. The housing unit should provide at least in one of the rooms three hours of solar exposure per day, measured on equinox days.
- Ground elevation. Ground floor apartments should provide privacy from the outdoor environment and should be raised at least 90 cm from the street level.
- Height of spaces. Minimal floor-ceiling height should not be lower than 256 cm and not higher than 278 cm. In basement floors it should not be lower than 210 cm.
- Minimum unit areas.

Table 1. Areas for each housing unit type (1993)

	Living unit types		
	Ap. 1+1	Ap. 2+1	Ap. 3+1
Total Unit Area (m ²)	71.00~82.4	88.1~98.5	101.9~113.9
Components of the Total Unit Area			
Usable Unit Area (m ²)	54.4~62.8	69.5~76.9	80.3~89.9
Stairwell Area (m ²)*	4.6~6.6	4.6~6.6	4.6~6.6
Walls Area (m ²)	12.0~13.0	14.0~15.0	~17.0

(*) When an elevator is installed, the Stairwell Area is increased with 1.6 m²/ap, the Usable Unit Area with 1.2~1.6 m²/ap, and the Total Unit Area with 2.8~3.2 m²/ap.

- Unit types.
 - 1+1:** One Bedroom (for a couple, including a bed for a kid), One Living room and kitchen
 - 2+1:** Two Bedrooms (bedroom 1 is for a couple including a bed for a kid; bedroom 2 is for two persons), One Living room and kitchen
 - 3+1:** Three Bedroom (bedroom 1 is for a couple including a bed for a kid; bedroom 2 is for two persons; bedroom three is for a single person), One Living room and kitchen
- Space areas. The following areas are recommended.

Table 2. Areas for each space (1993)

Zones	Spaces	Basic Unit Types		
		1+1	2+1	3+1
		Rational ranges m ²		
GP Living m ² /ap.	Bedroom 1	12.5~14.0	12.5~14.0	12.5~14.0
	Bedroom 2	-	12.0~13.0	12.0~13.0
	Bedroom 3	-	-	7.0~8.5
	Living room	17.0~18.0	18.0~19.0	19.0~20.0
Sum 1		29.5~32.0	42.5~46.0	50.5~55.5
GP Living m ² /ap.	Kitchen	5.0~6.0	5.5~6.5	6.0~7.0
	Washing	3.5~4.0	3.5~4.0	3.5~4.0
Sum 2		8.5~1.0	9.0~10.5	9.5~11.0
Service area m ² /ap.	Bath	4.0~4.4	4.0~4.4	4.0~4.4
	WC*	-	-	1.5
	Storage	1.5~2	1.5~2	1.5~2
	Cabinet	0.9	1.5	1.5
	Corridor	5.0~5.5	6.0~7.5	7~9
	Balcony	5.0~8.0	5.0~5.0	5.0~5.0
Sum 3		16.4~20.8	18.0~20.4	20.0~23.4
Sum 1+2+3		54.4~62.8	69.5~76.9	80.3~89.9

(*) An extra WC is planned in the 3+1 units.

Lightning and ventilation. Both lighting and ventilation for living areas should be made directly from outside. Electrical lightning and ventilation through air ducts are acceptable for kitchens, bathrooms and washing areas.

Staircases. Ramp width should not be smaller than 120 cm and landing width not less than 130 cm. Riser should be between 16 and 17.5 cm and tread not less than 28 cm. The stairwell should be lightened and ventilated. An elevator is installed for buildings higher than five stories.

Beyond the basic architectural design criteria, the norm is giving detailed specifications also on building structures and construction, electrical network, communication, natural and electric lightning, protection against atmospheric charges, water supply, hot water etc.

The norm is concerned also about comfort temperatures in winter and thermal insulation. Following are some of the most important parameters defined.

- Indoor temperatures (in winter).

Table 3. Comfort temperatures (1993)

Space	Indoor temperature
Living room / Dining	20°C
Bedroom	16~17°C
Corridor	16°C
Stairwell	10°C
Bathroom	20°C

- Minimal thermal insulation. The values refer to thermal resistance as an indicator of the thermal insulation of the building element.

Table 4. Thermal Resistance (1993)

No.	Element of the envelope		RESISTANCE $R = \sum \delta / \lambda$			
			ZONE			
			I	II	III	
1	Outer Walls		0.3	0.4	0.5	Every point
2	a	Walls between housing and work environments	Buildings with no central heating		0.3	Every point
	b		Buildings with central heating		0.08	
	c	Stairwell walls		0.3		
3		Slabs dividing housing and work environments	Buildings with no central heating		0.4	Every point
			Buildings with no central heating		0.2	
3a	The usable ground floor in contact with the earth (no basement).		0.5	0.75	1.00	Every point
3b	Slabs under unoccupied roofs		0.75			Average
			0.5			In the less favorable points (thermal bridges)
4	Ceiling slab of a basement floor		0.75			Average
			0.5			In the less favorable points (thermal bridges)
5	Slabs dividing housing from the outer environment		1.0	1.3	1.6	Average
			1.1	0.6	0.8	In the less favorable points (thermal bridges)
6	Ceiling slabs dividing housing from the outer environment		1.25			Average
			0.9			In the less favorable points (thermal bridges)

4.1.2 DCM 814, 03.12.2004, On Housing Norms for the families that benefit from the Social Housing Programmes.

The DCM On Housing Norms for the families that benefit from the Social Housing Programmes, refers to the Law 9232, 13.05.2004 On Social Housing Programmes (updated in 2007, 2008, 2016).

This act is removing the obligation for the Social Housing Programmes to comply with the Housing Design Norms approved in 1993 (DCM 567). At the same time, the DCM 113, 20.01.1997 On Housing Norms in buildings that are built with public funds is abrogated.

The Housing Norms defined in 2004 come as a very simplified normative based basically on unit areas and on space occupancy. These parameters are defined as follows:

- Minimum living area for one person shall not be less than 12.5 m²;
- Minimum living area for an individual older than 10 years old after the first one shall not be less than 7.5 m²;
- Minimum living area for an individual 5-10 years old after the first one shall not be less than 3.75 m²;
- Children under the age of 5 are not calculated for area requirements;
- The social housing can provide up to 15% space than the above norms;
- Individuals with limited abilities have the right to benefit 12.5 m² in a separate room;
- Individuals older than 10 years old of different sex have the right to have separate rooms.

Table 5. Living areas for each housing unit type (2004)

Unit Type	Studio		1+1		2+1		3+1	
	Min 1	Max 2	Min 2	Max 3	Min 3	Max 4	Min 4	Max 6
Number of occupants								
Living Area (m ²)	12.5	20-21	20-21	27.5-29.75	27.5-29.75	35-38	35-38	50-56

The above areas refer only to the living area (living room and bedroom) while the additional spaces like kitchen, washroom and services are calculated referring to DCM 567/1993.

4.1.3 DCM 626, 15.07.2015, On the approval of Norms for Housing Design

This act is sanctioning the Housing Design Norms, obligatory to apply to all the new housing from 2015. At the same time, the DCM 567, 06.12.1993 On Housing Design Norms is abrogated.

The recommended space for a housing unit are:

Table 6. Areas for each space (2015)

Spaces	Basic Unit Types		
	1+1	2+1	3+1
Bedroom 1	12	12	12
Bedroom 2	-	8	12
Bedroom 3	-	-	8
Living room + Open Kitchen	12 2.52	13 2.52	14 2.52
Kitchen and Dining	6.16	6.8	8
Kitchen without Dining	4.2	4.2	4.2
Bath*	3.6-4.2	3.6-4.2	3.6-4.2
Storage	1-1.5	1-1.5	1-1.5
Corridor	4-5	6-7	6-7
Balcony	0.6	0.6	0.6
Stairwell	5.3-5.5	5.3-5.5	5.3-5.5

(*) Housing Units 2+1 and 3+1 include minimally two bathrooms

- Height of spaces. Minimal floor-ceiling height for housing floors should not be lower than 270 cm. In offices or hotels the minimum height should be 350 cm.
- The minimal housing areas defined by the norms are:

Table 7. Areas per person (2015)

Minimum areas per person / unit		
Studio for	1 person	40.46 m ²
	1 person with disabilities	49.99 m ²
House for	1 person	43.93 m ²
	1 person with disabilities	53.70 m ²
House for	2 persons	56.47 m ²
	2 persons with disabilities	67.69 m ²
House for	3 persons	79.74 m ²
	3 persons with disabilities	94.80 m ²
House for	4 persons	80.50 m ²
	4 persons with disabilities	95.26 m ²

- The norms are defining specific design criteria and requirements for the different spaces of a house. A short summary of the content can be found below.
- Living room. Minimal width of a living room is 3 m. The living room must be exposed at least for two hours to solar radiation. The living room should provide natural lightning. The window area should not be less than 1/5 of the room area. Dining areas could be attached to living areas or kitchens affecting the area of the specific room.
- Kitchen. Minimal width of a kitchen (when it is located in a separate room) is 1.6 m. The minimal air volume in a separate kitchen is 15 m³. When in a separate room, the kitchen should have a window not smaller than 1/8 of their floor area. In all cases, the kitchen should be equipped with a mechanical ventilation system that extracts the vapour out of the space.
- Bedrooms. The minimum floor are in a single bedroom is 8 m² while in a bedroom for two is 12 m². The minimum width for a single bedroom is 2.2 m while a bedroom for two should be at least 2.4 m. In a couple's bedroom the minimum allowed width is 2.8 m. The width of a bedroom should not be smaller than half of its length. The window area should not be less than 1/5 of the room area.
- Bathrooms. Natural lightning should be used if possible. The space should be ventilated naturally or through mechanical systems. When openings are possible, window sizes should not be less than 1/20 of the bathroom floor area.
- The stairwell. The design of stairs and corridors should fulfil the ALS-P-MKZ-1501 when the stairwell is used as an escape route. The design of stairs, ramps, elevators and corridors should comply with DCM 1503, 19.11.2008 for the appropriate use from persons with disabilities. Elevators should be installed in accordance to the standards S SH EN, S SH EN ISO, DS CEN. The elevator's cabin in new housing buildings should be minimally 100 x 140 cm with a clear access door at least 75 cm wide. These dimensions can be reduced in existing building to 80 x 120 cm.
- Terraces. In buildings higher than five stories, terraces serve also as evacuation platforms and are provided with the appropriate access. Parapets should be at least 60 cm high for unusable terraces and 110 cm high for the accessible ones. The use of green terraces is encouraged.
- Roofs. The inclination of roofs is recommended to be 45-60 % in the mountainous areas, 30-45 % in the lowlands, 20-30 % in the coastal region.
- Balconies, lodges, verandas, greenhouses. Balconies should have a minimal width of 60 cm and parapets / railing at least 110 cm high. If railings are applied, the spacing between them should not be larger than 10 cm. Greenhouses should be oriented southeast, south or southwest and be maximally exposed to solar radiation during the cold season.

The last chapter of DCM 626 is dedicated to fire protection. Some of the norms defined in this chapter are listed below:

- All buildings should be equipped with an automatic fire detection and alarm system. All buildings higher than 30 m should be equipped with a sprinkler system.
- All escape / exit routes should be marked clearly and be visible. All routes should have a clear height of 2 m, except the doors. The minimum width allowed is 120 cm. Larger dimensions are depending on the number of persons to evacuate. The length of the escape routes in one direction varies from 7 m to 26 m depending on the risk profile.

- The doors located on the escape routes should be easy to open. The door opening should be in the evacuation direction when it will be used to evacuate 60 people or more. The minimum door width allowed is 80 - 105 cm. Larger dimensions are depending on the number of persons to evacuate. The minimum opening of these doors is 90°. The doors on the escape routes should be equipped with viewing panels. The last exit that leads to a safe area should be clearly visible and should have the appropriate dimensions.
- Terraces could be used as secondary escape routes. In this case the building materials and components should guarantee 30 minutes of fire resistance.
- All staircases that serve for evacuation should be protected in a fire resistant stairwell. The minimum allowed width of a staircase going down is 100 cm and a climbing staircase it is 120 cm. Larger dimensions are depending on the number of persons to evacuate.

4.1.4 DCM 957, 25.11.2015, On the approval of the regulations on Reference Levels of Indoor Radon Concentration and other Radionuclides Concentrations in commodities with public protection effect

Radon is a noble gas present in buildings. The gas is considered a health hazard and its presence is affecting the incidence of lung cancer. Referring to DCM 957/2015, the annual average concentration of Radon in the air inside residential and public buildings shall not exceed 300 Bq/m³. Remediation is necessary through interventions in existing buildings where the concentration is exceeding the reference level. At the same time, the new buildings should be designed and constructed to be "Radon free".

Building materials used in new buildings should also fulfil the requirements of DCM 957/2015 in order to achieve an indoor external exposure to gamma radiation emitted lower than 1 mSv per year.

4.1.5 Law 116/2016, On Energy Performance of Buildings

Although this law is not directly related to the housing design norms, in Article 9 "Nearly zero energy buildings" it implies that from 31 December 2020, all new buildings should fulfil the indicators that define a Nearly Zero Energy Building. In order to achieve this objective, new buildings must have a very well insulated thermal envelope and should apply measures for energy efficiency.

On the other hand, buildings that will be subject of a major renovation, will have to fulfil the minimal requirements of energy performance.

In both cases, while considering Social Housing, special attention should be given to the use and consumption of energy and to the perspective of Law 116/2016.

4.2 COMPARATIVE DATA

Some comparisons related to the different standards for minimum floor areas applied in Albania since 1993 are shown in the table below. It is noticeable the difference of 2004 standards which are based on the calculation of minimal living area per capita rather than on the spatial requirements for each living space.

Table 8. Compared norms (1993, 2004, 2015)

Floor areas in m ² (walkable area)						
Unit Type	Number of Persons	1993	2004 ¹⁰	2015		
Studio	1 P	NA	~37	40.46		
	2 P		~45	NA		
1+1	1 P	54.4 – 62.8	NA	43.93		
	2 P		~45	56.47		
	3 P		~55	NA		
2+1	3 P	69.5 – 76.9	~55	79.74		
	4 P		~65	80.5		
3+1	4 P	80.3 – 89.9	~65	80.5		
	5 P		~72 - 84	NA		
	6 P	NA				
Space	Unit Type	1993	2004	2015		
Living room	1+1	17 – 18	NA	12		
	2+1	18 – 19		13		
	3+1	19 – 20		14		
+ Open Kitchen		NA		2.52		
Kitchen	1+1	5 – 6		NA	4.2	
	2+1	5.5 – 6.5				
	3+1	6 – 7				
Kitchen + Dinning	1+1	NA			NA	6.16
	2+1	NA				6.8
	3+1	NA	8			

¹⁰ Approximate areas calculated according to DCM 814/2004 and DCM 567/1993

Floor areas in m ² (walkable area)				
Space	Number of Persons	1993	2004	2015
Utility / washing		3.5 – 4	NA	NA
Bedroom	1 P	7 - 8.5		8
	2 P	12 - 14		12
Balcony		5		0.6 x
Corridor	1+1	5 – 5.5		4 - 5
	2+1	6 – 7.5		6 - 7
	3+1	7 – 9		6 - 7
Storage		1.5 – 2		1 – 1.5
Cabinet		0.9 – 1.5		
Bathroom		4 – 4.4		3.6 – 4.2
Second WC / Bath		1.5		
Stairwell		4.6 – 6.6		5.3 – 5.5
Minimal allowed space dimensions in meters				
Space dimension		1993	2004	2015
Minimum living room width		NA		3 m
Minimum bedroom width (1 P)		2.2 m		
Minimum bedroom width (2 P)		2.4 m		
Minimum bedroom width (Couple)		2.8 m		
Window to Floor Area ratio				
Space		1993	2004	2015
Minimum window area in living room		NA		FA / 5
Minimum window area in bedroom		FA / 5		
Minimum window area in kitchen		FA / 8		

4.3 REQUIREMENTS OF LAW NO. 22/2018

The Law no. 22/2018, On Social Housing, was approved by the Albanian Parliament on 03 May 2018. The objective of the law (Article 1) is to define administrative rules and procedures on planning, providing, administering and disseminating social housing programmes, in order to create the possibilities of adequate and affordable housing. These programs have to be based on the payment ability of the families in need of housing and on the assistance of the responsible state institutions.

The law introduces the concepts of *affordable* and *adequate housing* by referring to the following definitions:

Affordable Housing (Article 3) – Expenses for an adequate house do not exceed 25% of the family's income for medium income families, 20% of the family's income for low income families, and 15% of the family's income for very low income families.

Adequate Housing (Article 4) – An adequate house is considered to provide privacy and a safe, peaceful and dignified life for an individual or a family. It should provide sufficient living area, basic services within the house, safety and resistance, access to public services, access to employment, social, health, educational and community services. At the same time, adequate housing provides appropriate access to persons with disabilities, to the elderly and to children, by avoiding social segregation.

At the same time, the law is introducing principles to be considered by the housing programmes such as:

- The principle of residence security;
- The principle of respect for culture and traditions of communities;
- The principle of participation;
- The principle of transparency and public information;
- The principle of non-discrimination.

As it can be noticed, the law is focused on the qualitative aspects of living. Although social housing is offered to people with no sufficient income, it doesn't mean they should have a low quality of life. The law is concerned to avoid the prejudice (present in Albania) of low quality social houses by explaining the concept of adequacy and by introducing criteria and principles that often are not considered in planning, design or in development programs.

The law is concerned also about creating new social housing. A new mechanism is introduced to provide social housing through private investments. The law implies that new private constructions with housing area more than 2000 m² should give 3% of the total housing area to the *Social Housing Fund*. This mechanism would create an increase of the Social Housing Fund, benefiting from the investments on the construction market.

The law defines six different social housing programmes listed and described below:

1. *the Social Housing Rental Programme, SHR (BSQ);*
2. *Programme to Enhance the Conditions of Existing Dwellings or Construction of New Ones;*
3. *the Affordable Dwelling Unit Programme, ADU (BKU);*
4. *the Area Development Programme for Housing Purposes;*
5. *the Temporary Shelter (accommodation) Programme;*
6. *the Specialized Housing Programme.*

4.3.1 The Social Housing Rental Programme, SHR (BSQ)

One of the most important types of Social Housing Programmes is Rental Housing. The public social houses are built or bought from the Local Government Units (LGU). They can also derive from the housing area transferred to the Social Housing Fund by private investors.

The status of *Social Owner* can be obtained both from public or private entities that fulfil the requirements of this law. The annual social rent cannot exceed the average market rent, the 3% of the construction cost or the 3% of the market value of the house. The rent subsidy amount can be up to 100% of the average rental value in the housing market. The maximum subsidy value is determined annually from the LGU.

The SHR (BSQ) programme is prioritizing the following categories to benefit from rent subventions:

- Orphans;
- persons with disabilities;
- the elderly;
- work invalids;
- families of police officers that lost their life in service;
- emigrants returned to Albania;
- emigrant workers;
- asylum seekers;
- families of the Roma and Egyptian communities;
- victims of domestic violence or trafficking;
- single parents with children and young mothers;
- LGBTI community who are victims of sexual orientation or gender identity;
- young people with legal problems;
- families with the status of tenant in ex-private houses.

4.3.2 Programme to Adapt and Enhance the Conditions of Existing Buildings and Dwellings

This programme allows LGU to compete with each other aiming to obtain funds from the state budget in order to transform buildings they own in social houses or to improve the conditions of existing houses. In specific cases, when it is not possible or it is too expensive to improve the existing building conditions, new constructions are also possible. This programme refers mainly to buildings with high structural risk or buildings in need of necessary improvements.

The programme is prioritizing the following categories:

- Orphans;
- persons with disabilities;
- the elderly;
- families of police officers that lost their life in service;

- families of the Roma and Egyptian communities;
- rural communities;
- victims of domestic violence or trafficking;
- single parents.

4.3.3 The Affordable Dwelling Unit Programme, ADU (BKU)

The ADU (BKU) programme provides housing that fulfils all the technical norms and standards. These houses are sold with prices lower than the market, but higher than the construction cost. These category of buildings / houses can be built or bought in the market from public bodies.

The norms and standards for these buildings shall be defined by the Council of Ministers. The individuals or families benefiting from the programme, shall fulfil the criteria specified in the law and may obtain a partial grant or a subsidy of credit interests.

The programme is prioritizing the following categories:

- Orphans;
- persons with disabilities;
- families of the Roma and Egyptian communities;
- single parents.

4.3.4 The Area Development Programme for Housing Purposes

The Area Development Programme for Housing Purposes relates to development or redevelopment of certain areas in conformity with the national and local planning documents in order to provide social housing. This programme can be supported by public budgets or by PPP. The programme can include also areas with informal constructions, incomplete buildings and ex industrial areas occupied by homeless individuals.

The programme offers the possibility to provide with no cost the terrain and infrastructure for the families that can afford building their house conform the criteria defined by the LGU.

4.3.5 The Temporary Shelter (accommodation) Programme

The Temporary Shelters are defined as not definitive constructions, that can be assembled and disassembled easily, meant for being used in a temporary period of not more than two years. These shelters can be used to lodge refugees, returned emigrants, homeless and relocated people, or to create temporary lodging in case of disasters.

The Temporary Shelters must be located in appropriate, safe and clean areas and should provide protection against atmospheric conditions, suitable infrastructure and hygienic facilities. Additional requirements for these kind of structures should be specified in the respective bylaws.

The programmes can be financed by public funds, donations, loans offered by public or private institutions.

4.3.6 The Specialized Housing Programme

This programme refers to Social Housing dedicated to specific housing needs. The conditions and standards for each category included in the Specialised Housing Programme are defined by DCM.

These category of houses could be built, bought in the market or rented from the LGU. The programme can be financed with public funds, co-financing through donators or loans from private or public institutions.

The programme is providing houses for the following categories:

- **The elderly and persons with disabilities** – These buildings should be provided with the appropriate infrastructure for access, physiotherapy, medical care, first aid, communication, social services and community spaces.
- **The victims of trafficking and domestic violence** – This category includes also the potential victims of trafficking. These buildings should provide security, space for specialised social workers and state police officers, and communication.
- **Children with no parental care** – This category refers to children 14-18 years old, or young people 18-21 years old that have been released from rehabilitation and cannot join their family. In these cases, the building should provide space for the custody services, psychologist or social worker, and communication.
- **Young mothers** – This category refers to young mothers, refused to be accepted by their families, during and after their pregnancy, till the child becomes five years old. These buildings should provide health services dedicated to the mother and child's health and spaces for psychologist and social worker.

4.4 ANALYSIS OF THE BASIC BUILDING NORMS FOR THE SIX SOCIAL HOUSING PROGRAMS

The concept of adequate housing, introduced by Law 22/2018, implies the following design criteria and concerns:

- Privacy;
- Safety;
- Sufficient living area;
- Basic services in the house;
- Access to public services ;
- Appropriate access to persons with disabilities, elderly and children;
- Avoid segregation.

In order to guarantee the standards for adequate housing, basic design norms should be reviewed with the intent of defining the minimal indicators of adequacy which should be respected in all social housing programs. From a first review of the existing norms, it can be noticed that they are not focused to social housing and often offer confusing guidelines or parameters that refer to the

optimal comfort levels and not to the minimal levels. On the other hand, some of the norms and standards do not provide clear definitions and explanations which can lead to the misuse of the norm.

As described in the previous sections, the legislation in force and affecting Housing Design consists of the following:

- DCM 626, 15.07.2015, On the approval of Norms for Housing Design;
- DCM 1503, 19.11.2008, On the approval of the regulation “For the use of spaces from people with disabilities”;
- DCM 957, 25.11.2015, On the approval of the regulations on Reference Levels of Indoor Radon Concentration and other Radionuclides Concentrations in commodities with public protection effect;
- Law 116/2016, On Energy Performance of Buildings.

Referring to the actual legislation and also to the abrogated legal acts (DCM 567/1993, DCM 814/2004), a list of parameters have been extracted for a preliminary evaluation. In reference to the six Social Housing Programmes an analysis has been carried in order to identify:

- Basic / important design parameters not defined by legal normatives;
- Existing norms;
- Their accuracy and / or compatibility with the relevant program;
- The need of reviewing / redefining the norm;
- Special parameters related to specific housing Programmes.

This preliminary analysis is subject to further evaluation in order to provide a comprehensive understanding with reference to the Social Housing Programmes.

4.4.1 Basic Housing Design Parameters

The following review is relevant to Rental Social Houses, New Affordable Social Houses, Renovation of Existing Social Houses, and Adaptive Reuse of Existing Buildings into Social Houses.

The review is related to 4/6 Social Housing Programmes as follows:

- The Social Housing Rental Programme;
- Programme to Adapt and Enhance the Conditions of Existing Buildings and Dwellings;
- The Affordable Dwelling Unit Programme, ADU (BKU);
- The Area Development Programme for Housing Purposes.

Table 9. Review of the existing norms

Parameters	Existing norms	Need for review	Comments
The Building			
Minimum floor height	DCM 625/2015	YES	Adjustment needed
Minimum basement height	---	---	Need to be defined
Corridor dimensions	DCM 625/2015	NO	
Elevator number and dimensions	DCM 625/2015	YES	Specifications needed
Stair dimensions	DCM 625/2015	YES	Minimum and rational area to be defined
Parapet dimensions	DCM 625/2015	NO	
Minimum parking capacity	---	---	Need to be defined
Vehicle access and parking norms	---	---	
Accessibility for people with disabilities	DCM 1503/2008	NO	
The Unit			
Minimal area per person	DCM 625/2015	YES	Some of the areas are large
Number of users for each unit type	---	---	Need to be defined
Minimal area for Studio	---	---	
Minimal area for 1+1	---	---	
Minimal area for 2+1	---	---	
Minimal area for 3+1	---	---	
Minimal stair area per unit	DCM 625/2015	YES	Need to propose maximum area / unit
Minimum spaces required for Studio	DCM 625/2015	NO	
Minimum spaces required for 1+1	DCM 625/2015	NO	
Minimum spaces required for 2+1	DCM 625/2015	NO	
Minimum spaces required for 3+1	DCM 625/2015	NO	
Minimum exposure to solar radiation	DCM 625/2015	YES	The existing norm defines 2 hours of sun exposure for the living room
The Room			
Natural and artificial lightning	DCM 625/2015	NO	
Natural and mechanic ventilation	DCM 625/2015	NO	
Minimum window size	DCM 625/2015	NO	
Minimum living room dimensions	DCM 625/2015	YES	Review minimums
Minimum room dimensions	DCM 625/2015	YES	
Minimum balcony dimensions	DCM 625/2015	YES	Specify minimum area
Minimum bathroom dimensions	DCM 625/2015	YES	Specify minimum width

Parameters	Existing norms	Need for review	Comments
Energy and environment			
Reference U values for opaque and transparent elements	---	---	Need to be defined
Thermal bridges	---	---	
Greenhouses	DCM 625/2015	NO	
Green terraces	DCM 625/2015	NO	
Radon levels	DCM 957/2015	NO	
Fire protection			
Fire resistance	DCM 625/2015	NO	
Evacuation	DCM 625/2015	NO	

4.4.2 The Specialized Housing Programme

The norms and standards for this category of housing refer to the Basic Housing Design Parameters reviewed above but should reflect also additional functional and dimensional parameters specific for the Programme.

The elderly and persons with disabilities

The building must provide the following additional spaces:

- Medical care spaces;
- Physiotherapy room;
- First aid room;
- Community spaces.

The areas dedicated to the above spaces should be proportional to the number of the occupants in the building and to the number of working staff. In these buildings, special attention during the design should be provided to accessibility issues.

The victims of trafficking and domestic violence

The building must provide the following additional spaces:

- Security and control room;
- Social care spaces;
- Community spaces.

The areas dedicated to the above spaces should be proportional to the number of the occupants in the building and to the number of working staff. In these buildings, special attention during the design should be provided to security systems. These buildings should be accessible only through controlled entrances.

Children with no parental care

The building must provide the following additional spaces:

- Custodian spaces;
- Psychologist and social care spaces;
- Community spaces.

The areas dedicated to the above spaces should be proportional to the number of the occupants in the building.

Young mothers

The building must provide the following additional spaces:

- Specialised healthcare spaces;
- Psychologist and social care spaces;
- Community spaces.

The areas dedicated to the above spaces should be proportional to the number of the occupants in the building and to the number of working staff.

4.4.3 The Temporary Shelter (accommodation) Programme

The Temporary Shelter Programme refers to houses that *provide protection against atmospheric conditions, safety and hygiene*. These houses do not have to comply with the general Social Housing Design Norms considering that they are meant for temporary use under unusual conditions related mainly to disasters or other unpredictable situations.

The Temporary Shelters Programme can refer to different dimensional and functional norms than the other Social Housing Programmes. Some common features and minimal standards for this kind of houses are described below.

- The location of the houses should provide access to the basic public services by foot, public transport or by dedicated transport provided by the local authorities.
- It is acceptable to share rooms, services and hygienic spaces with other residents.
- The spaces should provide heating during the cold season.
- The sanitary areas and kitchens should be supplied with cold and hot water.
- All habitable spaces should have windows or doors that enable natural lighting and ventilation. The window area should be at least 1/10 of the total space / room area.

The houses included in the Temporary Shelter Programme can be also temporary constructions that can be assembled, disassembled and transported according to the needs.

5. GUIDELINES FOR THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL HOUSING

After reviewing the existing housing design norms, the following guidelines are proposed for social housing. The basic social housing design parameters in the following document do not intend to provide a full and detailed normative, rather than proposing the main criteria and concerns related to the design minimums to be applied in order to guarantee adequate housing. In many cases, the guidelines refer to the existing norms of housing design while in other cases, proposals that do not match the existing normative are given. Based on a critical analysis, these parameters, especially the minimal net housing areas, have been reconsidered as they refer to the optimal levels and not to the normative (minimum) levels. At the same time, the guidelines offer a set of new parameters that are being introduced for the first time and do support the concepts of adequacy and sustainability.

The proposed guidelines do not intend to address issues of fire safety and access from persons with disabilities which are addressed respectively in DCM 625/2015 and DCM 1503/2008.

At the same time, the guidelines is focused on the architectural characteristics of building and housing units rather than on aspects related to structural, electrical, plumbing and mechanical building systems.

For any other criteria, parameter or normative level not described in the guidelines, reference should be made to the existing legislation or when no reference is found, international best practices could be used.

Definitions used:

The areas

- **Building area** [sipërfaqja e ndërtimit]: the total of usable housing areas, stairs areas, wall areas, measured on the floor plan (as in DCM 626/2015).
- **Net housing area** [sipërfaqja neto e banesës]: the usable floor area, not including inner and perimeter walls, considered also the usable area or walkable area (as in DCM 626/2015). The measurements for calculating the area are taken from the interior finished surfaces of the walls.
- **Gross housing area** [sipërfaqja bruto e banesës]: the total of usable areas including internal walls (as in DCM 626/2015).
- **Stairs area** [sipërfaqja e shkallës]: the horizontal projection of the built ramp and landings, and elevators (as in DCM 626/2015). This area includes also the distribution paths / corridors till the entrance of the housing unit.
- **Wall area** [sipërfaqja e muraturës]: the total area of structural and partition walls measured in plan, including doors and windows (as in DCM 626/2015).

The above definitions for a residential area within a building can be explained as follows:

Building Area = Gross Housing Area + Stairs Area

Gross Housing Area = Net Housing Area + Wall Area

Other definitions

- **Family House** [banesë familjare]: permanent houses, apartments or housing units designed with the intent to provide the adequate conditions and spatial organisation for the wellbeing of a family.
- **Housing design norm** [normativë e projektimit të banesave]: As in DCM 626/2015.
- **Housing unit** [banesë]: As in DCM 626/2015 and Law 22/2018.
- **Minimum housing norm** [normë e strehimit]: As in Law 22/2018.
- **Persons with disabilities** [persona me aftësi të kufizuara]: As in Law 22/2018.
- **Residential building** [objekt banimi]: As in DCM 626/2015.
- **Social housing** [banesë sociale]: As in Law 22/2018.
- **Social housing programme** [program sociale strehimi]: As in Law 22/2018.
- **Space / Room** [hapësirë]: As in DCM 626/2015.
- **Specialized housing** [banesë e specializuar]: As in Law 22/2018.
- **Temporary housing / shelter** [banesë / strehë e përkohshme]: As in Law 22/2018.
- **Studio**: an independent housing unit, with a single space hosting the activities of living, cooking, dining and sleeping.
- **1+1**: an independent housing unit, with a living room and a bedroom.
- **2+1**: an independent housing unit, with a living room and two bedrooms.
- **3+1**: an independent housing unit, with a living room and three bedrooms.

The following guidelines refer to new residential buildings or existing buildings to be adapted in social housing, or existing social houses that undergo major renovations (renovation of more than 20% of the building / housing unit area). The existing residential buildings and housing units that do not meet the guideline parameters should gradually be adapted.

The guidelines in this document are intended for social housing and do refer to the allowed minimums. In some cases recommended levels are provided, in order to facilitate the understanding and the comparison of the given data.

With reference to building typology, the guidelines are divided in three groups:

- **Family Houses** [banesa familjare]. This type refers to permanent houses, apartments and housing units appropriate for the everyday activity of a family. The residential buildings can be detached single family houses, attached or collective houses designed with the intent to provide the adequate conditions and spatial organisation for the wellbeing of a family.
- **Specialised houses** [banesa të specializuara]. This type refers to houses with adapted and accessible infrastructure to meet functional, health and safety needs for vulnerable groups. Specialised housing, should provide additional services and / or spaces, in order to meet the specific needs of their residents. The housing units can be part of a Specialised Residential Centre or they can be separate units within normal housing blocks/areas.
- **Temporary shelters** [streha të përkohshme]. This type refers to temporary housing used in case of emergency of sheltering homeless individuals in need of immediate and short term accommodation, till a solution for permanent housing can be found. The temporary shelters are structures intended to provide protection against climatic and atmospheric

conditions and the basic space, dignity, safety, hygiene and health requirements. These shelters are meant for use up to two years, in emergency conditions related mainly to disasters, crisis, incoming refugees or other unpredictable situations.

The relationship between housing typology and the six social housing programmes defined by Law 22/2018, is shown in the table below.

Table 10. Relationship between the social housing programmes and the housing typology

Social housing programmes referring to Law 22/2018	Typology		
	Family Houses	Specialised Houses	Temporary shelters
The Social Housing Rental Programme, SHR (BSQ)	x		
Programme to Adapt and Enhance the Conditions of Existing Buildings and Dwellings	x		
The Affordable Dwelling Unit Programme, ADU (BKU)	x		
The Area Development Programme for Housing Purposes	x		
The Temporary Shelter (accommodation) Programme			x
The Specialized Housing Programme		x	

For the different housing typologies, the guidelines are grouped into in categories as follows:

- Guidelines for the Site / Location;
- Guidelines for the Building;
- Guidelines for the Housing Unit;
- Guidelines for the specific Rooms and Spaces;
- Guidelines related to Energy and Environment.

5.1 THE MINIMUM HOUSING NORM

The minimum housing norm in this guideline refers to the minimum net and gross housing area for an individual. All individuals over 18 years old that live in houses that provide less than the minimum housing norm per person are entitled to benefit from the social housing programmes.

The proposed minimum housing norm per person is **14m²** of gross housing area¹¹.

The result is obtained by dividing the gross housing area of the housing unit with the number of inhabitants living in it. Infants less than 5 years old are not considered in the calculation.

¹¹ If referring to net housing area the minimum housing norm is corresponding to 11-12 m² per person.

5.2 OVERCROWDING NORM

A bedroom in a housing unit can be used from:

- a couple
- 2 persons of the same sex
- 1 person

A housing unit will be considered overcrowded when:

- does not provide enough area to meet the minimum housing norm
- there is more than two persons using a bedroom
- there are bedrooms being used by two persons of different sex (except rooms used by couples or children less than 10 years old)

For the most common housing units, the possible use of bedrooms is given below.

Table 11. Occupation of rooms in the most common housing unit types

Housing unit type	Number of bedrooms	N – Number of residents	Room 1	Room 2	Room 3
Studio	-	1-2	1P / couple	-	-
1+1	1	2*	couple	-	-
2+1	2	3-4	1P / couple	1P / MM / FF	-
3+1	3	4-6	1P / couple	1P / MM / FF	1P / MM / FF

() In unit types with one bedroom, a child till 5 years old could be accommodated in the living room*

5.3 FAMILY HOUSES

Family houses are permanent residences adaptable to the lifestyle of a family. This typology corresponds to the following social housing programmes:

- The Social Housing Rental Programme, SHR (BSQ);
- Programme to Adapt and Enhance the Conditions of Existing Buildings and Dwellings;
- The Affordable Dwelling Unit Programme, ADU (BKU);
- The Area Development Programme for Housing Purposes.

The following guidelines are intended to be used while designing, building, renovating, buying or renting social houses for the above social housing programmes.

5.3.1 The Site / Location

Family houses should be developed in sites that:

- Are free from air pollution, soil contamination or any other forms of health hazards, natural or manmade threats and risks.
- Are well exposed to solar radiation.
- Are not exposed to frequent or regular noises greater than 85 dB.
- Provide vehicular access, electric and water supply.
- Enable accessing the basic public services in walking distance or through regular public transportation.

5.3.2 The Building

- Buildings should be carefully oriented, with the tendency to maximise south exposure and to provide cross ventilation.
- When possible, the design of green roofs or usable rooftops as social space for the residents is strongly recommended.
- Minimum floor-ceiling height for living areas in housing units should not be less than 265 cm.
- Minimum floor-ceiling height in service areas and basements should not be less than 240 cm.
- Bicycle parking must be provided in every building in order to encourage the use of bikes.
- All buildings should provide minimum 1 parking space for every 5 housing unit. Depending on the case the parking area can be within or outside the building.
- All buildings that locate housing units in levels higher than the ground floor should be equipped with elevators suitable for the access of persons with disabilities. One elevator can serve up to 60 housing units. The minimum cabin dimensions for an elevator in a new building should be at least 140 x 100 cm, as set in DCM 625/2015.
- The stairs area and horizontal circulation paths should not be less than 7% of the gross housing area and not smaller than 20 m².
- The main staircase width should not be less than 120 cm and the landing width and the main distribution corridors not less than 130 cm. Stairs located within the housing unit or stairs that serve floor areas smaller than 100 m² can have smaller dimensions. In any case, the width of stairs and corridors should also comply with the minimums specified in DCM 625/2015 and DCM 1503/2008 for the use from persons with disabilities. The stairwell should be lightened and ventilated. If no separate staircase or escape route, the stairwell should comply with the norms for fire safety and evacuation specified in DCM 625/2015.
- All stairs, balconies, terraces and accessible rooftops should be equipped with parapets or railings whose heights should not be less than the minimums specified in DCM 625/2015.
- All housing units within a building should be accessible for persons with disabilities. The design norms should refer to DCM 1503/2008.

5.3.3 The Housing Unit

A housing unit appropriate for a family should include at least a living room, a dining space, a kitchen, a bedroom, a balcony and a bathroom. Studio houses or single room houses are an exception, where all the above are provided in one single space, except the balcony and the bathroom which are separate. A studio house can be provided also for a single resident.

In a family house design it should always be taken into account the relationship between the capacity of the house and the number and sex of its inhabitants.

In order to benefit from natural ventilation and solar radiation, a two sided orientation / exposure of the housing units is strongly recommended.

At least one of the rooms of the housing unit should be exposed to solar radiation for minimum two hours a day, measured on the winter solstice (20-23 December).

The net housing area in relation to the number of occupants is proposed as follows.

The minimum usable space in a house for fulfilling the essential needs of a healthy life with spatial and cultural commodity, is recommended to be calculated as follows:

Net Housing Area = 20m² + N x 10 m²

where:

Net Housing Area is the minimum net area of the house, including living areas, bathrooms, storage, balconies, utility spaces and spaces occupied by furniture.

N is number of residents in a housing unit including infants

This simplified calculation method aims to be easy to understand, to remember and to apply. The basic components of such a formula are:

20 m² of space per housing unit: the minimum space needed to provide the basic functions of living, cooking, dining and the respective hygienic services for one person.

10 m² per person: the minimum space required to provide bed space and private area for one person and a proportional addition to the shared spaces within the housing unit (i.e. 7 m² of bedroom and 3 m² added to the total living room, kitchen, balcony, bathroom and storage).

Table 12. Proposed net housing area per person

N - Number of Occupants	Minimum Net Housing Area (m ²) *
1	30
2	40
3	50
4	60
5	70
6	80
7	90
8	100

(*) Additional areas: When providing social housing to persons with disabilities the above values should be increased with 5-12 m², considering an extra room to be added to the housing unit. For housing units with two or more floors, a minimum of 4 m² per floor should be added for vertical circulation.

The most usual unit types, the possible occupancy for each unit and the recommended number of bathrooms are given in the table below.

Table 13. Suggested occupancy and number of bathrooms for the most common unit types

Unit Type	Living Room	Bedrooms	N - Number of Occupants	Bathrooms / WC
Studio	1		1-2	1
1+1	1	1	2*	1
2+1	1	2	3-4	1-2
3+1	1	3	4-6	2

(*) In unit types with one bedroom, a child till 5 years old could be accommodated in the living room

The following table is defining the minimum net area and the maximum recommended area for each of the most common housing unit types. These maximum recommended areas are intended to be considered for social housing built with public funds.

Table 14. Suggested minimum and maximum areas for the most common unit types

Areas for each housing unit ¹²				
Unit Type	Net Area (m ²)		Gross Housing Area (m ²)	
	Minimum	Max. (*) Recommended	Minimum	Max. (*) Recommended
Studio	30	45	34	53
1+1	40	55	47	65
2+1	50	81	58	95
3+1	60	100	70	118

(*) The maximum recommended areas refer to compact housing units located in urban areas designed for a qualitative life with possibility for different activities and adaptable to different needs.

A comparison between the proposed norms and the previous ones in Albania is illustrated in the below table.

Table 15. Comparison of the proposed norms with the previous ones in Albania

N - Number of Occupants	Minimum Net Housing Area (m ²)			
	Proposed 2019	2015	2004 ¹³	1993
1	30	40.46 – 43.93	~37	NA
2	40	56.47	~45	54.4-62.8
3	50	79.74	~55	NA
4	60	80.5	~65	69.5-76.9
5	70	NA	~72	80.3-89.9
6	80	NA	~84	NA
7	90	NA	NA	NA
8	100	NA	NA	NA

¹² The area occupied by the walls and vents is calculated as 11-15% of the gross area of the housing unit. The building technique refers to the most common type of Reinforced Concrete skeleton structure with brick partitions.

¹³ Calculated values

Some comparison with international norms and practices can be found below.

Table 16. Comparison of the proposed norms with other countries

N - Number of Occupants	Minimum Net Housing Area (m ²)			
	Japan	Italy	Proposed Albania	UK ¹⁴
1	25	28	30	~36
2	30	38	40	~46
3	40	42	50	~56
4	50	56	60	~64
5	60	66	70	~79
6	70	76	80	~87
7	80	86	90	~99
8	90	96	100	~107

5.3.4 The Room

All rooms shall be independent from each other so that no room shall be crossed or used as a passage to access a bedroom or a bathroom. The minimum space design criteria recommended are listed in the table below:

Table 17. Proposed minimum space requirements

Space / Room	Minimum horizontal dimension (m)	Minimum floor-ceiling height (m)	Minimum net area (m ²)	Need for natural light and ventilation	Minimum window area (ratio to room area)
Living	2.75*	2.65*	11*	Yes	1/5
Dining	--	2.65*	1.96	Yes if in separate space	1/5
Kitchen	--	2.65*	2.31*	If possible	--
Kitchen in separate space	1.6	2.65*	4.2	Yes	1/8
Single Bedroom	2.15*	2.65*	7*	Yes	1/5
Twin Bedroom	2.55*	2.65*	11*	Yes	1/5
Couple Bedroom	2.75*	2.65*	11*	Yes	1/5
Balconies	0.6	2.4*	1*	--	--
Bathroom / WC	--	2.4*	2.7*	If possible	1/20 when possible
Washing	--	2.4*	--	If possible	--
Corridor	0.9*	2.4*	1.5*	No	--
Storage	--	2.4*	1	If possible only ventilation	--

(*) Reviewed / Proposed criteria, different from actual housing norms

¹⁴ Estimate values

Specific guidelines related to particular spaces are listed below.

The Kitchen. The kitchen should be equipped with a sink and a mechanical air extraction system located over the cooktop. The sink should provide hot water. The wall next to the sink and the cooktop should be treated with materials which are easy to clean and resistant to high temperatures and humidity.

The Bathroom. The bathroom should be equipped with a water closet, a lavatory and a shower. Installation of bath tubs or bidets are optional depending on the space allowance, budget and specific requirements. The bathroom should be supplied with hot water. The bathroom surfaces should be treated with materials which are easy to clean, and resistant to humidity. The floor should be waterproof and the flooring should be slip resistant. Mechanical ventilation must be provided in order to achieve a ventilation of 15 air changes per hour.

The Balcony. The balcony / lodge / veranda / terrace should be provided with safety parapets or railing not less than 110 cm high. Railings should be designed in such a way, that a sphere with diameter 10 cm cannot pass through in any point. It is recommended that the balcony area increases proportionally to the number of occupants, providing at least 0.6 m²/resident. When possible, in cold climates, with the purpose to gain solar heat, glass enclosure should be provided for balconies facing southeast, south, and southwest.

The Bedroom. Bedrooms should provide bedspace and private space for one or two residents. Number sex and age of occupants should be considered in social housing programmes while designing / assigning the bedroom space. In social housing, persons with disabilities should have the right of a separate bedroom.

5.3.5 Energy and Environment

- The design of the building envelope should aim to provide minimum air leakage, high thermal resistance and no thermal bridges.
- The building's energy consumption should be in accordance with Law 116/206 and the deriving bylaws.
- If no references found, in order to save energy for heating and cooling the housing units, and in order to provide adequate levels for indoor thermal comfort, the following values of thermal transmittance (U-value) are proposed as maximum accepted values. Lower values are recommended to be used in areas with cold winter.

Table 18. Max. U values recommended (for family houses)

Envelope component	Maximum U – value (W/m ² K)
Walls	0.7
Roofs	0.5
Floors	0.7
Windows	3

The envelope should be designed to maximise solar gain during the winter and to reduce it at minimum during the summer. Shading devices should be incorporated in the building design for south and west façade orientations, particularly in areas with hot summer.

- Use of environmentally friendly building materials is strongly recommended. These can be recycled or easily recyclable materials, building materials that have a minimal environmental impact, building materials that enable high energy savings etc.
- The use of porous / permeable materials in the hardscape is strongly recommended. At least 20% of the site surface should be permeable.
- In order to minimise the heat island effect, the minimal use of hardscape and maximisation of green and natural surfaces on the site is recommended.
- The indoor Radon levels in all the living areas should be below 300 Bq/m³ as specified in DCM 957/2015.

5.4 SPECIALISED HOUSES / RESIDENCES

Specialised houses provide adapted and accessible infrastructure to meet functional, health and safety needs for vulnerable groups. This typology corresponds to the following social housing programme:

- The Specialized Housing Programme

The specialised housing programme is providing housing and services for the following categories:

- The elderly and persons with disabilities;
- The victims of trafficking and domestic violence;
- Children with no parental care;
- Young mothers.

Each of the above categories defines a typology of specialised housing that has specific design needs.

The following guidelines are intended to be used while designing, building, renovating, buying or renting social houses for the specialised housing programme.

5.4.1 The Site / Location

Specialised Houses / Residences should be developed in sites that:

- Are free from air pollution, soil contamination or any other forms of health hazards, natural or manmade threats and risks.
- Are well exposed to solar radiation.
- Are not exposed to frequent or regular noises greater than 85 dB.
- Provide vehicular access, electric and water supply.
- Enable easy access to communitarian life, to basic public services and avoid segregation.

5.4.2 The Building

- Buildings should be carefully oriented, with the tendency to maximise south exposure and to provide cross ventilation.
- When possible, the design of green roofs or usable rooftops as social space for the residents is strongly recommended.
- Minimum floor-ceiling height for living areas in housing units should not be less than 265 cm
- Minimum floor-ceiling height in service areas and basements should not be less than 240 cm
- Administration and guest parking should be provided. Parking places for residents and bicycle parking should be offered depending on the case.
- Elevators appropriate to transport wheeled chairs and / or stretchers should be installed in specialised houses for the elderly and persons with disabilities.
- The main staircase width should not be less than 120 cm, the landing width not less than 130 cm and the main distribution corridors not less than 150 cm. In any case, the width of stairs and corridors should also comply with the minimums specified in DCM 625/2015 and DCM 1503/2008 for the use from persons with disabilities. The stairwell should be lightened and ventilated. If no separate staircase or escape route, the stairwell should comply with the norms for fire safety and evacuation specified in DCM 625/2015.
- All stairs, balconies, terraces and accessible rooftops should be equipped with parapets or railings whose heights should not be less than the minimums specified in DCM 625/2015.
- The specialised houses should provide space heating and cooling, preferably using a central system.

5.4.3 The Housing Unit

The housing unit in a Specialised House / Residence can be an Apartment or an Accommodation Room. Both units could be shared or private depending on the residence type, structure and on the specific needs of the residents. The housing units can be part of a Specialised Residential Centre or they can be separate units within normal housing blocks/areas.

An apartment should include at least space for living, dining, kitchen and sleeping, a balcony and a bathroom. Apartments can host 1-6 residents depending on the type and structure of the residence.

An accommodation room should include at least a bedroom, a balcony and a bathroom. Accommodation rooms can host 1-2 residents depending on the type and structure of the residence. Bathrooms can also be shared between two rooms. Living areas, dining and kitchen / kitchenette may be shared between residents depending on the type of residence and the specific needs.

When in a Specialised Residential Centre, several housing units can be organized in groups that offer additional spaces and specialised services depending on the residence type and structure. The maximum capacity of a Specialised Residential Centre is 120 residents which should be organised in groups / blocs of 8-30 residents with the appropriate services for each group.

Table 19. Proposed norms for specialised housing

Specialised House Type	Unit	Nr. of Occupants	Minimum Net Unit Area (m ²)	Grouping
The elderly and persons with disabilities	Room	1	18	8-10 residents with communal living room, kitchenette and dining space where meals are served.
		2	22	
	Apartment	1	35	
		2	45	
Victims of trafficking and domestic violence	Room	1	16	10-12 residents with communal living room, kitchenette and dining space.
		2	20	
	Apartment	1	30	10-20 residents with communal spaces.
		2	40	
		3	50	
		4	60	
Children with no parental care	Room	1	16	10-12 residents with communal living room, kitchenette, dining space and study room.
		2	20	
	Apartment	1	30	10-20 residents with communal spaces and study room.
		2	40	
		3	50	
		4	60	
		5	70	
		6	80	
Young mothers	Room	1 + ch.	20	10-12 mothers with communal living room, kitchenette and dining space.
	Apartment	1 + ch.	35	10-30 residents with communal spaces.

Specific services and / or spaces to be provided for each Specialised Residential Centre are as follows:

The elderly and persons with disabilities

The residence must provide the following additional spaces for the housing units:

- Medical care spaces (minimum one for 20 residents);
- Physiotherapy room;
- First aid room;
- Nurse room;
- Community spaces.

In these buildings, special attention during the design should be provided to accessibility. Housing unit entrances and circulation within the residence should be appropriate for wheeled chairs.

Beds should be adjustable in different positions. Alarm bells should be nearby every bed and in the bathroom.

Slip resistant materials are recommended to be used on the floor.

The victims of trafficking and domestic violence

The residence must provide the following additional spaces for the housing units:

- Security and control room;
- Social care spaces;
- Community spaces;
- Vocational training spaces.

In these buildings, special attention during the design should be provided to security systems. These buildings should be accessible only through controlled entrances.

Children with no parental care

The residence must provide the following additional spaces for the housing units:

- Custodian spaces;
- Psychologist and social care spaces;
- Community spaces;
- Study room / library.

Young mothers

The residence must provide the following additional spaces for the housing units:

- Specialized healthcare spaces for mother and child;
- Psychologist and social care spaces;
- Community spaces;
- Children playground.

The minimum criteria recommended for space design refer to the Family House criteria (5.3.4).

5.4.4 Energy and Environment

- The design of the building envelope should aim to provide minimum air leakage, high thermal resistance and no thermal bridges.
- The building's energy consumption should be in accordance with Law 116/206 and the deriving bylaws.
- If no references found, in order to save energy for heating and cooling the housing units, and in order to provide adequate levels for indoor thermal comfort, the following values of thermal transmittance (U-value) are proposed as maximum accepted values. Lower values are recommended to be used in areas with cold winter.

Table 20. Max. U values recommended (for specialised houses)

Envelope component	Maximum U – value (W/m ² K)
Walls	0.7
Roofs	0.5
Floors	0.7
Windows	3

- The envelope should be designed to maximise solar gain during the winter and to reduce it at minimum during the summer. Shading devices should be incorporated in the building design for south and west façade orientations, particularly in areas with hot summer.
- Use of environmentally friendly building materials is strongly recommended. These can be recycled or easily recyclable materials, building materials that have a minimal environmental impact, building materials that enable high energy savings etc.
- The use of porous / permeable materials in the hardscape is strongly recommended. At least 20% of the site surface should be permeable.
- In order to minimise the heat island effect, the minimal use of hardscape and maximisation of green and natural surfaces on the site is recommended.
- The indoor Radon levels in all the living areas should be below 300 Bq/m³ as specified in DCM 957/2015.

5.5 TEMPORARY SHELTERS

Temporary shelters are used in case of emergency of sheltering homeless individuals in need of immediate and short term accommodation. These structures are intended to provide protection against climatic and atmospheric conditions and the basic space, dignity, safety, hygiene and health requirements. The use of this typology relates to emergency conditions, disasters, crisis, incoming refugees etc. This typology corresponds to the following social housing programme:

- The Temporary Shelter (accommodation) Programme

The following guidelines are intended to be used while designing, building, renovating, buying or renting spaces for the temporary shelter programme.

As a typology, in accordance with the specific situations when they are used, temporary shelters could be:

- **Dormitories.** Dormitories are mainly permanent structures sheltering homeless people. Dormitories are mainly buildings designed or adapted for known or predictable number of homeless people.
- **Camps.** Camps are temporary structures that serve to affront unpredicted number of homeless people deriving as a result of an emergency. These structures are built mainly in case of catastrophes, crisis, fluxes of refugees or other emergency situations.

The shelters designed, built or adapted for the Temporary Shelter Programme can be apposite buildings, adapted ones and also temporary constructions that can be assembled, disassembled and transported according to the needs. Tents, prefabricated huts, dwellings built with local materials etc. are some of the alternative forms of building that can be adapted in order to provide temporary shelters.

5.5.1 The Site / Location

Temporary shelters should be developed in sites that:

- Are free from air pollution, soil contamination or any other forms of health hazards, natural or manmade threats and risks.
- Are exposed to solar radiation.
- Are not exposed to extreme climatic conditions.
- Are not exposed to frequent or regular noises greater than 85 dB.
- Enable vehicular access, electric and water supply.
- Enable accessing the essential services through regular or dedicated public transportation.

In the case of site selection for camps, the area should also provide:

- At least 30 m² of site area per resident.
- Easy drainage and have permeable soil. A minimum slope of 1% and a maximum of 5% are recommended.

5.5.2 The Shelter

General layout:

- Shelters should be positioned or oriented, with the tendency to maximise south exposure and to provide good ventilation.
- The positioning of shelters should provide the condition for hygiene and safety.
- The space organization should provide fire protection and easy evacuation.
- When possible, the design of social or communal space for the residents and playground area for children is strongly recommended.
- In the case of Camps or Dormitories with high number of residents, it is necessary to provide additional spaces or services for each group of 15-60 residents. These spaces could be: cooking area, dinning, healthcare or psychological treatment spaces, public space, playground for children etc.
- Accessibility barriers should be avoided for shelters hosting the elderly and persons with disabilities.
- Administration and guest parking should be provided. Parking space for residents and bicycle parking should be considered depending on the case.

Design criteria:

- The design of the shelter envelope should aim to provide minimum air leakage and good thermal resistance. When possible, use of environmentally friendly building materials is recommended.
- Minimum floor-ceiling height should be at least 200 cm. A height of 240 - 265 cm is recommended.
- All habitable spaces should have windows or doors that enable natural lighting and ventilation. The window area should be at least 1/10 of the net space / room area.
- The shelters should provide access to water, electricity and gas.
- The shelter should be heated during the cold season.

Functional requirements:

- Hygienic services, living, dining and kitchen areas may be shared among residents. If separate from the shelters, they should be located in a distance from 6 to 50m.
- The sanitary areas and kitchens should be supplied with cold and hot water.
- The shelter should provide at least covered and secured sleeping areas for the residents.
- Separate and secured spaces should be provided for different families.
- The shelter spaces and services should be equipped with the appropriate furniture, items and equipment in order to guarantee functionality and adequate living standards.

Minimum spaces and functions to be provided:

- 3.5 m² per resident in shelter area excluding sanitation services and cooking. When possible, a 4.5 m² minimum should be used.
- 1 shared WC for every 20 residents separated by genders.
- 1 shower for every 40 residents separated by genders.
- 1 tap stand for every 80 persons.
- 1 m² kitchen and dining area per resident.

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7 APPENDIX

(INTERNATIONAL CONCEPTS / NORMS / STANDARDS)

7.1 THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE HOUSING

The right to adequate housing, is described in *The Right to Adequate Housing - FS21 Rev.1., UN Habitat, 2014* as follows:

Adequate housing was recognized as part of the right to an adequate standard of living in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Increased international attention has also been paid to the right to adequate housing.

The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has underlined that the right to adequate housing should not be interpreted narrowly. Rather, it should be seen as the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity.

The right to adequate housing contains freedoms.

These *freedoms* include:

- Protection against forced evictions and the arbitrary destruction and demolition of one's home;
- The right to be free from arbitrary interference with one's home, privacy and family; and
- The right to choose one's residence, to determine where to live and to freedom of movement.

The right to adequate housing contains entitlements.

These entitlements include:

- Security of tenure;
- Housing, land and property restitution;
- Equal and non-discriminatory access to adequate housing;
- Participation in housing-related decision-making at the national and community levels.

Adequate housing must provide more than four walls and a roof.

A number of conditions must be met before particular forms of shelter can be considered to constitute "adequate housing." These elements are just as fundamental as the basic supply and availability of housing. For housing to be adequate, it must, *at a minimum*, meet the following criteria:

- *Security of tenure*: housing is not adequate if its occupants do not have a degree of tenure security which guarantees legal protection against forced evictions, harassment and other threats.
- *Availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure*: housing is not adequate if its occupants do not have safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, energy for cooking, heating, lighting, food storage or refuse disposal.
- *Affordability*: housing is not adequate if its cost threatens or compromises the occupants' enjoyment of other human rights.
- *Habitability*: housing is not adequate if it does not guarantee physical safety or provide adequate space, as well as protection against the cold, damp, heat, rain, wind, other threats to health and structural hazards.
- *Accessibility*: housing is not adequate if the specific needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups are not taken into account.
- *Location*: housing is not adequate if it is cut off from employment opportunities, health-care services, schools, childcare centres and other social facilities, or if located in polluted or dangerous areas.
- *Cultural adequacy*: housing is not adequate if it does not respect and take into account the expression of cultural identity.

Protection against forced evictions.

Protection against forced evictions is a key element of the right to adequate housing and is closely linked to security of tenure.

Forced evictions are defined as the “permanent or temporary removal against their will of individuals, families and/or communities from the homes and/or land which they occupy, without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection.”

Forced evictions are carried out in a variety of circumstances and for a variety of reasons, for instance, to make way for development and infrastructure projects, urban redevelopment or city beautification, or prestigious international events, as a result of conflicts over land rights, armed conflicts or societal patterns of discrimination. Forced evictions tend to be violent and disproportionately affect the poor, who often suffer further human rights violations as a result. In many instances, forced evictions compound the problem they were ostensibly aimed at solving.

Regardless of their cause, forced evictions may be considered a gross violation of human rights and a prima facie violation of the right to adequate housing. Large-scale evictions can in general be justified only in the most exceptional circumstances and only if they take place in accordance with the relevant principles of international law.

Safeguards in the case of evictions

If eviction may be justifiable, because the tenant persistently fails to pay rent or damages the property without reasonable cause, the State must ensure that it is carried out in a lawful, reasonable and proportional manner, and in accordance with international law. Effective legal recourses and remedies should be available to those who are evicted, including adequate compensation for any real or personal property affected by the eviction. Evictions should not result in individuals becoming homeless or vulnerable to further human rights violations.

In general, international human rights law requires Governments to explore all feasible alternatives before carrying out any eviction, so as to avoid, or at least minimize, the need to use force. When evictions are carried out as a last resort, those affected must be afforded effective procedural guarantees, which may have a deterrent effect on planned evictions. These include:

- An opportunity for genuine consultation;
- Adequate and reasonable notice;
- Availability of information on the proposed eviction in reasonable time;
- Presence of Government officials or their representatives during an eviction;
- Proper identification of persons carrying out the eviction;
- Prohibition on carrying out evictions in bad weather or at night;
- Availability of legal remedies;
- Availability of legal aid to those in need to be able to seek judicial redress.

Common misconceptions about the right to adequate housing

The right to adequate housing does NOT require the State to build housing for the entire population.

The right to adequate housing covers measures that are needed to prevent homelessness, prohibit forced evictions, address discrimination, focus on the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, ensure security of tenure to all, and guarantee that everyone's housing is adequate.

The Government, rather than playing the role of housing provider, becomes the facilitator of the actions of all participants in the production and improvement of shelter.

In specific cases, however, the State may have to provide direct assistance, including housing or housing allowances, notably to people affected by disasters (natural or man-made) and to the most vulnerable groups in society.

The right to adequate housing is NOT only a programmatic goal to be attained in the long term.

States must make every possible effort, within their available resources, to realize the right to adequate housing and to take steps in that direction without delay. Notwithstanding resource constraints, some obligations have immediate effect, such as the undertaking to guarantee the right to adequate housing in an equal and non-discriminatory manner, to develop specific legislation and plans of action, to prevent forced evictions or to guarantee a certain degree of security of tenure to all.

The right to adequate housing does NOT prohibit development projects which could displace people.

There are inevitable needs for the redevelopment of certain areas in growing cities and for public agencies to acquire land for public use and infrastructure. The right to adequate housing does not prevent such development from taking place, but imposes conditions and procedural limits on it. It is the way in which such projects are conceived, developed and implemented that is important.

The right to adequate housing is NOT the same as the right to property.

The right to adequate housing is broader than the right to own property as it addresses rights not related to ownership and is intended to ensure that *everyone* has a safe and secure place to live in peace and dignity, including non-owners of property. Security of tenure, the cornerstone of the right to adequate housing, can take a variety of forms, including rental accommodation, cooperative housing, lease, owner-occupation, emergency housing or informal settlements.

On the other hand, protection of the right to property might be crucial to ensure that certain groups are able to enjoy their right to adequate housing. The recognition of spouses' equal rights to household property, for instance, is often an important factor in ensuring that women have equal and non-discriminatory access to adequate housing.

The right to adequate housing is NOT the same as the right to land.

Access to land can constitute a fundamental element of the realization of the right to adequate housing, notably in rural areas or for indigenous peoples. Inadequate housing or the practice of forced evictions can be the consequence of being denied access to land and common property resources.

As such, the enjoyment of the right to adequate housing might require, in certain cases, securing access to and control over land.

Nevertheless, international human rights law does not, currently, recognize a self-standing right to land.

The right to adequate housing includes ensuring access to adequate services.

The right to adequate housing does not just mean that the structure of the house itself must be adequate.

There must also be sustainable and non-discriminatory access to facilities essential for health, security, comfort and nutrition. For example, there must be access to safe drinking water, energy for cooking, heating, lighting, sanitation and washing facilities, means of storing food, refuse disposal, site drainage and emergency services.

