

**Question for written answer P-001683/2013
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Marije Cornelissen (Verts/ALE)

Subject: Country-specific recommendation concerning the Netherlands housing market

In the context of the 2012 European Semester the Commission issued a country-specific recommendation in which it called on the Netherlands to carry out a gradual reform of its housing market by taking measures which should include the following:

'(ii) providing for a more market-oriented pricing mechanism in the rental market, and (iii) for social housing, aligning rents with household income'.

The accompanying Commission staff working paper makes it clear that in the Commission's view one aim of the housing market reform should be to '[scale] down the scope and size of the social housing segment' (SWD(2012)0322 final, p. 7).

1. What individual EU policies and objectives underpinning the European Semester form the basis for the aforementioned recommendation to the Netherlands concerning the reform of its housing market?
2. How can the Commission's call for a more market-oriented pricing mechanism in the rental market and measures to align rents for social housing with household income be reconciled with the broad discretionary powers enjoyed by national, regional and local authorities to organise the provision of services of general economic interest, as stipulated in Article 1 of Protocol 26 to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and how does the Commission intend to respond to the concerns voiced by the European Parliament¹ concerning the Commission's restrictive interpretation of the State aid rules in relation to social housing associations?
3. Will the Commission give an undertaking that, when drawing up any country-specific recommendations to the Netherlands concerning the reform of its housing market, it will confine itself to making recommendations consistent with the Europe 2020 targets, with the integrated guidelines for jobs and growth, with the sections of the Annual Growth Survey approved by the Council and with Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011 and that it will explain the thinking behind the recommendations in the accompanying staff working paper?

¹ European Parliament resolution of 15 November 2011 on the reform of the EU state aid rules on Services of General Economic Interest (P7_TA(2011)0494).