

HOUSING POLICY

1
2 This is DSF’s policy paper on housing; it will outline the problems students are facing in relation
3 to the housing market and the general perspectives to our solutions. The paper specially
4 addresses the fundamental problem; there are still a shortage of affordable housing for students.
5 Student housing is accommodation that is only offered to students and covers the needs of
6 students. In order for the accommodation to get the label “student housing”, DSF believes that
7 the accommodation must measure up to the requirements described below. DSF also recognizes
8 that the selection of student housing needs to be wide enough to ensure that students with
9 certain requirements can find housing that suit their needs.

10 The design of the student housing must be such that the student at the least has space for
11 sleeping, for studying and closet space, without this taking up all the space-. In addition, the
12 accommodation is not to be shared unless otherwise requested by the student. Following this, it
13 must be possible for the student to use the accommodation to study. These standards shall be
14 upheld under all circumstances whether the accommodation is permanent or temporary.
15 Otherwise, the student must have access to good lavatory, bathing and kitchen facilities.
16 Whether these facilities are shared or belongs to the individual student housing is secondary. It
17 is naturally expected, that all student housing live up to health- and safety requirements, which
18 unfortunately is not the case in several existing student housing today.

19 The location of student housing regarding the place of one’s study are of essential importance.
20 DSF fundamentally believes it is up to us, as students, to decide where we live, but there shall be
21 a housing market that provides the opportunity to live close to one’s study. Therefore, it must be
22 possibility to get a study residence, where the distance from study residence to study location
23 does not restrict a strong connection with the study environment and the possibility to be
24 socially engaged in and outside the study.

25 In addition to the above requirements for student housing, in both design and placement, it is
26 important to understand that such a student residence must also be adapted to students’ special
27 requirements, if they should have them. Student housing for students who e.g. are parents or
28 having a disability, can not be considered student housing if they do not meet the special needs
29 that may arise for these students.

30 The student housing must be affordable for students, who must also be able to afford the other
31 expenses of everyday life. Therefore, the monthly rent for student housing including utilities

32 must not exceed 50 % of the student grant¹, calculated after taxes. The amount left hereafter must
33 be big enough to cover fixed expenses such as food, insurances etc.

34 **A larger housing market – housing for all students**

35 DSF are working for sufficient housing for all students within and near all the study cities. This
36 calls for political action, both nationally and locally.

37 The most important is to establish sufficient and affordable housing for students. Therefore, DSF
38 must work towards the construction of more affordable dorms. These homes must be searchable
39 for all students. The pilot scheme where municipalities are given the right to earmark sites for
40 common housing must be expanded and made permanent, so all municipalities have the
41 opportunity to earmark specific sites for common housing. The municipalities must use this
42 pilot scheme and give the common housing associations the best possible conditions for build
43 housing in the cities.

44 Besides the continued work with the Planning Act², many other political initiatives must be put
45 to use by the municipals. DSF believes that politicians at municipal and state level should
46 convert empty and qualified municipal owned buildings to student housing. Following this,
47 there ought to be allocated more resources to the construction of new sustainable student
48 housing and for transformation of the existing buildings in the municipal budgets. With
49 sustainability, we mean inclusion of economic, social, ethnical and environmental aspects.

50 DSF believes that the measures being made to solve the current housing shortage must ensure
51 affordable housing, while maintaining and strengthen the students' housing political rights.
52 With the 2017 change in the Planning Act, which included an extension of the placement of
53 temporary housing of up to 10 years, the possibilities with temporary housing have grown. This
54 ensures that the buildings, when they are placed, can be at that site for a longer period of time
55 and the building will lose its temporary character towards the tenant, which is positive. Another
56 aspect of temporary housing is also that because of its temporary character, it can be difficult to
57 create a functioning social environment and tenant democracy. Therefore, the municipalities
58 has a duty, when it comes to temporary solutions, to form settings for tenant democracy and
59 environments, where the tenants can meet socially and academically.

60 Even if the period of time where a residence can be placed at a time has been prolonged, it should
61 always be made clear what should happen after the student relocates in initiatives made by the
62 municipal. Temporary housing is a solution to an acute problem, but must never remove focus

¹ The 50 percent is calculated based upon the minimum grant given to students, who does not live with their parents and are enrolled on a higher education as described by Danish Agency for Institutions and Educational Grants, under the Ministry of Higher Education and Science. <http://www.su.dk/su/om-su-til-videregaende-uddannelser-universitet-journalist-laerer-mv/satser-for-su-til-udeboende-paa-videregaende-uddannelser/>

² In Danish: planlov

63 from the real problem. Therefore, DSF believe permanent solutions should always be prioritized
64 above temporary ones.

65 There are housing problems in the study cities across the country but these problems and
66 challenges vary from town to town and from region to region. Therefore, it is important, when
67 making initiatives on the housing sector on local, as well as regional and national level, to have
68 the existing differences in mind. For example, many municipalities already have a housing
69 guarantee. Unfortunately, the quality of these vary quite a lot and several places it is not a well-
70 functioning guarantee. The municipalities should provide real guarantees, and DSF also
71 believes that a national housing guarantee should be introduced which, at the start of the studies,
72 ensures students a housing that meets the criteria and grounds outlined in this paper. This
73 housing guarantee should be administered locally and controlled nationally. Similarly, DSF
74 believes the campus regulations and the law on administrative practices in public
75 administration, in its current form, poses unnecessary barriers to the fact that the institutions'
76 buildings can be used for housing. That is why it is DSF's view that the campus regulations
77 should be revised so that universities can sublease their buildings for use as student housing.

78 **The value of having accommodation**

79 A well-functioning housing situation is an important prerequisite for students to live a physical
80 and mentally healthy student life. By being ensured accommodation and feeling comfortable in
81 this, the student can dedicate one's time to study and other important aspects of one's study life.
82 A good housing situation generally provides the basis for students' to have a personal life and
83 have stability and peacefulness in one's everyday life. What a well-functioning housing situation
84 involve varies from student to student, but the absence of such can provoke both insecurity and
85 stress.

86 It is important to assure that no students are being driven into an insecure housing situation. To
87 certain groups of students this problem is especially big. The need to find permanent
88 accommodation is typically larger for example international students, students who are relocate
89 far away from their network to study, students who are exposed socially, physically or mentally,
90 and students with children. Because of this, DSF puts great value in already existing
91 measurements, as well as new, for helping these groups and we still believe that these
92 measurements should be expanded.

93 **A precarious rental market for students**

94 Factors such as the students' low income and the shortage of affordable housing often lead to
95 precarious conditions in the rental market for students. This is clear evidence of a structural
96 problem on the housing market, where tenants are pressured by a rental market, without
97 sufficient housing and where many of the existing housing are way too expensive. An example
98 of this is that students often live in temporary subleasing, while looking for permanent housing.
99 Unfortunately, it is more and more common to experience students being caught in going from

100 one temporary lease to another for several years in a row. This can for some students, become a
101 way of life, because the permanent lease is not necessarily the next in line. Students are often
102 forced to settle with what is available at the rental market and this can easily lead to a bad spiral
103 in regards to temporary sublets.

104 This way of living is undesirable for many reasons: For example, it can be harder to attend to
105 one's study, if you are feeling insecure on how long you have a place to live. It can also lead to
106 major economic difficulties if you are forced to move often. Subletting, however, is not
107 exclusively a negative, but can be desirable for instance in the case of exchange students.

108 We must put an end to the precarious rental market and therefore, it is important that there are
109 being worked on a local and national level with initiatives that tries to relieve the pressure on
110 the rental market, so no one is forced to live temporarily for longer periods of time during one's
111 studies.

112 **Rights and student influence at the housing market**

113 The low income of students and our needs for finding accommodation with short notice,
114 combined with the precarious conditions at the housing market, leads to students often being
115 pressured to accept conditions that others on the housing market would not accept. This means
116 that many students are exposed to cheating and fraud from landlords who exploit the students'
117 insecure housing situations. Therefore, it is important that students can easily find information
118 on their rights and options on the housing market. Especially at the time leading up to the start
119 of studies, this is important because of the increased pressure on the housing market, which can
120 be a cause when bottleneck problems arise. Both municipalities and education institutions has
121 a responsibility, in this regard, to ensure easy accessible information and guidance, so the
122 students safely can navigate in the housing market. It is also essential with possibility for help
123 through e.g. rent- or tenant complaints boards.

124 Regarding search for housing, there are some students with more specific needs, such as
125 students with disabilities and students with children, who should have priority in regards to
126 housing that meets their needs. Moreover, in DSF we believe that students who geographically
127 are living far away from their institution of education, likewise should be prioritized housing,
128 near their area of education.

129 Some groups of students' experience, besides being exposed due to their low income and acute
130 need for housing, to be discriminated against based on for example ethnicity, gender, nationality
131 or choice of education, and therefore have disproportionate difficulties to find housing. In DSF,
132 we believe that all students have the right to housing and therefore, we do not tolerate
133 discrimination.

134 Likewise, it is important that dispensations for dorms and students housing are being handled
135 transparent after criteria of need and that there is a majority of students in the dispensation

136 committees³. Furthermore, it is important that student housing is distributed on the basis of
137 transparent and clear criteria and processes. It should be as easy as possible to apply for student
138 housing. Therefore, the structure of the dispensation committees should be made as transparent
139 as possible for students who would like to live nearby their respective educational institutions.
140 In larger municipalities, the best solution is often one central dispensation committee. It is,
141 however, important that these deliberations happen in cooperation with the education
142 institutions and student organisations of a given area, as a single solution may not be the best
143 everywhere.

144 **Conclusion**

145 DSF works to ensure all students the possibility for a place to live, for the housing to be of
146 satisfying quality and for fair conditions on the housing market.

147 Therefore, DSF believes that:

- 148 • A student accommodation must be placed so the distance does not limit the connection
149 to the study environment
- 150 • The rent for student housing must not exceed 50% of the student grant
- 151 • There must be sufficient student housing for students in and near all of the studying
152 cities
- 153 • The pilot scheme with earmarking of sites for common housing must be done permanent
154 and expanded
- 155 • There must be allocated more local funds for building new student housing
- 156 • DSF must work for there to be build more affordable and sustainable student housing,
157 including dormitories
- 158 • Temporary housing must never stand in the way of long-lasting solutions
- 159 • There should be imposed a national housing guarantee at the start of studies
- 160 • The efforts to help particular exposed in need of housing is important and must be
161 maintained
- 162 • Information about rights on the housing market must be easily accessible for students
- 163 • There must be no discrimination on the housing market based on for example ethnicity,
164 gender, nationality or choice of education
- 165 • There should always be a majority of students in the dispensation committees for dorms
166 and student housing
- 167 • There should be aimed for no more than one dispensation committee in each
168 municipality

³ In Danish: instillingsudvalg