



## PRESS RELEASE

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Entities and public policies

# PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR STUDENT HOUSING

**At the start of the 2023 academic year, 2.97 million students and apprentices were enrolled in French higher education, an increase of 25 % compared to 2012. This development raises the question of the capacity of the housing stock to meet their needs, particularly at the start of the academic year. Student housing is not the same as ‘student accommodation’, which refers only to the accommodation that is strictly reserved for students, and which accounts for only 11 % of their accommodation solutions. At a time when student demographic trends are on the verge of reversing, the Court and the regional chamber of *Île-de-France*, the region with the most students and the highest rents, have been asked to assess the support measures in place to ensure the development of and effective access for students to the various types of housing stock, both public and private.**

**Numerous support schemes for student housing exist side by side, but they have not been coordinated into a formalised strategy**

The growth of the student population has led the public authorities to move from a specific response, based around the Crous university residences, to more extensive use of common law housing policy measures. Since the 1980s, social landlords have been mobilised to ensure the successive phases of expansion of the social student housing stock, then through the government plans of 2012 and 2017, up to the latest government roadmap of November 2023 and the *Caisse des Dépôts* plan of May 2025. The extension of personalised housing assistance (APL) to all students in 1991 completed their integration into mainstream housing schemes. As a result, student housing now falls under both higher education policy and housing policy—two areas that are largely decentralised and shared with local authorities. Public support for student housing is therefore not part of a formalised public strategy, but rather the result of interactions between multiple players with converging but differentiated interests. Even though the public authorities probably did not anticipate the housing consequences of the 25 % increase in the student population since 2012, the APL and the expansion of the socially-oriented housing stock nevertheless helped to absorb this demographic shock.

**Public schemes aim to be both universal and targeted at priority groups**

Representing €2.3 billion in 2023, or 15 % of all personalised housing assistance, the amount of APL paid to students has risen by 30 % in constant euros since 2005, in line with the increase in student numbers, and embody the universalist ambition to support all students in accessing independent housing, regardless of their actual income. It is in fact difficult to support the 44 % of students housed in private rented accommodation by means other than the APL, due to the lack of direct and effective leverage. Since 2012, the bulk of public action has focused on expanding the stock of social student housing, resulting in a net expansion of 69,300 housing units between 2012 and 2023, a higher rate than the increase in the student population over

the same period. Beyond this overall quantitative outcome, the scale of enhanced support for grant-holding students, made up of both increased APL payments and priority access to Crous housing or other affordable residences, is not sufficient to meet overall demand, particularly in urban areas with high housing pressure. This finding is reinforced by the shrinking supply within the Crous network, due to places being reserved by higher education institutions for students on international mobility programmes.

### **Public schemes only provide in-depth support for certain students on modest incomes and do not resolve regional disparities**

While several schemes aim to provide enhanced support for the most disadvantaged students, public authorities have not set themselves the goal of reducing regional disparities or of taking stronger action in areas where access to housing is most difficult, particularly in Île-de-France. The prominence given to the local level assumes a strong partnership-based form of governance to ensure consistency of action over time. Several areas have succeeded in creating this dynamic. Among those examined, the metropolitan areas of Lyon and Bordeaux have set up specific governance structures for student housing, bringing together decentralised government departments, local authorities and operators. On the other hand, in the Île-de-France region, which is home to more than a quarter of the country's higher education students, the situation calls for a change of strategy. Conditions of access to housing for students are the most difficult in the country. In social terms, the “supported pathway”, which is the result of the link between the system of grants based on social criteria and guaranteed access to Crous accommodation for the highest level grant holders, usually combined with the Visale guarantee scheme, has a significant threshold effect. This raises the question of how low-income students whose incomes are just above the thresholds can get into this supported option.

### **The impact of housing on students' academic success is not currently evaluated**

Public support for student housing aims to enable everyone to follow the higher education pathway of their choice. Even if housing is not the most important factor in a student's choice of course, each new stage in their university career is likely to raise the question of their ability to find accommodation. In order to facilitate this process, the Crous network seeks to adapt as best it can to the constraints of the academic calendar, even if this means increasing its vacancy rate and bearing the economic cost. Similarly, five-year cohort studies illustrate the ability of family allowance funds to ensure the continuity of the APL entitlements despite regular moves, even if actual payment schedules are sometimes a source of dissatisfaction for students. While it is difficult to objectively assess the quality of student housing due to the wide variety of situations, the link between housing and students' living conditions is well documented. Two key dimensions stand out: the financial aspect, related to the cost of independent housing and the potential risk of financial insecurity, and the time aspect, depending on whether the housing location saves or costs time. Finally, the specific link between student housing support schemes and academic success has not yet been studied in enough depth to be clearly established.

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***The Court of Accounts ensures that public money is used properly and informs citizens accordingly.***

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