

# 22 EUROPEAN CITIES DEMAND RESTRICTIONS FOR AIRBNB AND CO.



22 cities in Europe have called for tougher restrictions for platforms such as Airbnb. Room rentals are putting "growing pressure on property prices", according to an appeal to the EU Commission and the European Parliament, which has been submitted. Affordable living space is becoming scarce because the apartments or houses are being taken out of the regular rental market.

Signatories of the call include Cologne, Frankfurt am Main, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Florence, Paris, Prague, Warsaw, and others. The cities welcomed the announcement by EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen that she intends to modernize the rules for housing platforms.

According to the call, **the cities want a uniform legal framework that "guarantees respect for the law throughout the European Union"**. Tourism is important, the municipalities stressed. First and foremost, however, it is about a good quality of life for local citizens in their respective neighborhoods.

The boom in tourist apartment rentals in European cities is very significant according to the letter, giving examples: in Amsterdam, the number of advertisements increased from 4,500 in 2013 to 22,000 in 2017. In the historic district of L 'Alfama in Lisbon, more than 55% of housing has been transformed into tourist accommodation. Restrictions for Airbnb are necessary for such localities.

The 22 cities explicitly cited Airbnb and Abritel Homeaway, adding that the presence of tourist accommodation has "become synonymous with the nuisance in public space". The cities collectively demand a new European legislative framework for the Digital Single Market, providing for the compulsory transmission of data by platforms to local authorities, to help cities comply with regulations; the obligation for platforms to publish the registration numbers of the advertisements they publish when registration is provided for by regulations; the responsibility of platforms in the event of non-compliance with laws and regulations in the Member States (in particular for the sharing of data and the removal of illegal advertisements).

Airbnb announced that the US company was already working "with numerous cities across Europe". Cities such as Berlin and Paris have imposed stricter regulations on the residential platform after real estate and rental prices there have risen massively.

Moreover, recently Airbnb signed an agreement with the EU Commission on data exchange. The purpose is to provide the authorities with information on the number of guests using short-term rentals and the number of overnight stays. Other travel platforms are also taking part. Experts point out that Airbnb is trying to peace down the booming controversy and such a step forward should help a lot.

The new partnership between Airbnb and Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Commission, states that from now on, the platform will exchange data with Eurostat on short-term rentals on Airbnb and other platforms.

The EU Commission hopes that the cooperation will lead to improved statistics on tourist

accommodation throughout Europe, to enable European authorities to better understand the development of the sharing economy and to support evidence-based policy and fight overtourism.

The data will be published on a quarterly basis, which will help authorities to better understand the development of short-term rental platforms and thereby help them make policy decisions in Europe.

The announcement followed a letter from Airbnb to European cities in which the platform calls for, among other things, an exchange of views on taxes, trust and transparency. **Airbnb says it wants to work with governments and authorities and supports the creation of an EU-wide coordination body for digital services.**

"This landmark partnership will help ensure that cities have the information they need to effectively regulate home-sharing," said Chris Lehane, Senior VP of Global Policy and Communications at Airbnb. "We hope that this data will be an important basis for governments and agencies at all levels as we continue to work together to develop fair and proportionate rules for all.

However, Airbnb is not the only travel platform that now provides Eurostat with data on short-term rentals. Among others, the Expedia Group is also participating in the project. Among other things, it sees this as an opportunity to help promote tourism in Europe in a sustainable manner.

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