

EU Housing Ministers meeting: Housing is not only a local matter

On Monday 21st of June, Housing Ministers met for their annual informal meeting in Toledo on the invitation of the EU Spanish Presidency.

CECODHAS HOUSING EUROPE has been actively involved in the preparation and was represented by its President Vit Vanicek, president of the Union of Czech and Moravian Housing Cooperatives. "I am pleased that several times it was mentioned that housing is not only a local issue of the member states. It influences the whole European policies from finance, to energy, employment and social cohesion. That is why it is necessary to pay relevant attention to housing at European level which is an idea I also aim to support." he said after the meeting.

CECODHAS HOUSING EUROPE was also represented by Francesc Villanueva, Spanish member of the board, and Rudy de Jong, Vice President who reported on the main issues discussed during the meeting:

Access to housing policies:

- Ministers reported on a general shift in EU from supply to demand support (i.e. from subsidies for construction to personal housing benefits). The Swedish



CECODHAS Housing Europe's President, Vit Vanicek, and Vice-President Rudy de Jong at the Housing Ministers meeting

acknowledged this was an obvious reason to change their system.

- There's a general acceptance that Housing policy is much more than just an affordable decent place to live. It is inextricably linked to social policy, inclusion, neighbourhoods, jobs, sustainability, etc.
- Furthermore, housing policy must be connected with financial policy. Housing has also a role to play in reaching EU energy policy objectives.

Key findings from EU housing statistics:

- Convergence of housing markets: general increase of home ownership, rising to a natural maximum of ca. 75% until 2007.
- Decrease of home ownership after the economic crisis
- Overall decline of housing production and transactions from 2007 to 2009. Housing shortage is increasing.

Finally the Belgian delegation announced the establishment of a working group to share policy experiences on major retrofitting programmes.

The following day, Ministers responsible for urban development meeting adopted the **Toledo Declaration** calling for urban regeneration to become an EU priority.

CECODHAS HOUSING
EUROPE News

Communicating financial attractiveness to investors

On the 16th of June, CECODHAS housing Europe held its second 'KPI seminar'.

Following a first meeting in February in Helsinki which first explored the issue of key performance indicators in

In this issue

- **Highlight:** European Housing Ministers Meeting in Toledo → page 1
- **CECODHAS HOUSING EUROPE News:** KPI seminar; public procurement → page 1-2
- **EU News:** Belgian Presidency; open consultations: state aid rules on SGEIs & implementation of services directive; EU citizens pessimistic about poverty; CoR on homelessness; UR-BACT cities response to the crisis; Neighbors' Day 2010 → page 2-5
- **Open Calls & Deadlines:** World Habitat Awards 2010; local authorities good practices in supporting migrant elders → page 5
- **News from Members: In this issue,** news from the Netherlands, Sweden, Northern Ireland, England and France → page 5-7
- **Research & Publications:** Briefing on Housing & the crisis → from page 7
- **Events** → page 8

social housing with the aim of increasing professionalisation and gain in visibility and access to capital markets, this second meeting presented practices from our membership in measuring financial and economic viability of social housing companies, and communicating financial attractiveness to investors.

Second public procurement experts working group

On the 17th of June, experts on public procurement from our membership met for the second time, to discuss recent developments in this field at European level.

After a first meeting mainly dedicated to exchange on common problems related to PP between our members, the second meeting was the occasion to present the action taken by CECODHAS Housing Europe at the European level in this field, based on difficulties identified by members.

An initiative report on European Parliament on PP and latest developments was presented. Our proposals were included in the report. A specific European Court of Justice case on land selling was explained and debated, to clarify CECODHAS Housing Europe members' action in the field of urban development. Finally, with regards to the EC consultation on concessions, members decided to ask for clarity and for flexibility in the use of this tool.

EU News

Belgian Presidency to place social issues at the top of EU agenda

On the first of July, Belgium took over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Working in tandem with the eighteen-month common work programme set up as a "trio" with Spain and Hungary, Belgium has set out its own priorities which it will pursue throughout its Presidency of the Council of the EU.

In a recent interview Philippe Courar, Belgian Secretary of State for Social Integration, said that budget cuts are not the most appropriate way of answering the fears of millions of Europeans living through difficult times. "*Times are hard, it's true,*" said Courar. "*But the fact that there are no alternatives to the budget cuts is very worrying.*" The article states that Belgium will place social issues at the top of the EU political agenda. The three targets under the "social issues" chapter of the Belgian EU presidency are child poverty, low income families and homelessness.

Find out more on the website of the Belgian presidency: <http://www.eutrio.be/>

(Source: Vita Europe)

Have your say: Consultation on the Monti Package now open!

The European Commission recently announced the opening of a public consultation on state aid rules on services of general economic interest. The deadline to answer the consultation is 10 September 2010.

The Commission wishes to consult public service providers and their associations, public service users and their associations, stakeholders, citizens and all interested parties, in order to have their views on the application of the SGEI Package. For this purpose, the Commission has prepared a questionnaire, to give guidance on the feedback it wishes to have through this consultation.

One session during CECODHAS Housing Europe September meetings will be specifically dedicated to the revision of the "Monti Package" concerning state aids for social housing: on September 16 in the afternoon, an Internal Market seminar will be held where each member will present its answer to the consultation and on actions taken towards their responsible Ministry.

The questionnaire on the consultation on State aid rules on services of general economic interest has to be filled in and sent back before the 10th of September. To know more and participate to the consultation please visit: http://ec.europa.eu/competition/consultations/2010_sgei/index_en.html

EC launches consultation on implementation of the services directive

The Commission launched a stakeholder consultation to assess the national measures implementing some provisions of the services directive: in particular, the measures relating to the requirements imposed by member states on the establishment of service providers and on the cross border provision of their services.

The stakeholder consultation will be open until September 13. It is part of the evaluation process of a number of national measures that member states and the Commission have been carrying out since the beginning of 2010. By the end of the year, the Commission will report on the result of this evaluation process to the Council and the European Parliament.

For further information: http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/consultations/2010/services_directive_en.htm

Survey shows citizens pessimistic about poverty

European Union citizens believe that poverty has increased over recent months and are relatively pessimistic about the future, according to a recently released European survey entitled '**Monitoring the social impact of the crisis**'.

One European in six reports a constant struggle to pay household bills and three quarters believe that poverty has increased in their country over the past year. *"The survey results confirm that poverty is a major issue in the EU and that the current economic and financial situation is aggravating the situation further"* said the Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, László Andor.

The survey, carried out in May 2010, marks the halfway of the 2010 European Year against poverty and comes after EU leaders agreed on June 17 to lift 20 million Europeans out of poverty and social exclusion over the next decade. *"Sentiments vary from one region to another. In Belgium, for example, 35% of those in Brussels cite an upsurge in poverty, while in a city in the North [Antwerp], this figure is only 10%. This demonstrates the role that the Commission can play in going via the European Social Fund,"* commented Andor, during the publication of the survey, before recalling the hopes he was pinning on the new 2020 strategy for employment and growth, which contains a quantified target for combating poverty.

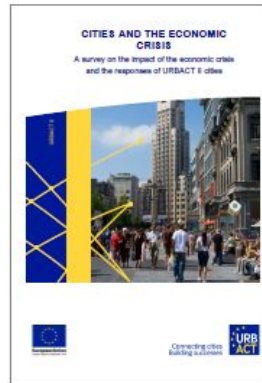
Committee of the Regions: such high level of homelessness is simply wrong

With one in six Europeans claiming that they find it difficult to pay household bills according to a new Eurobarometer survey, the CoR has been quick to speak out against the social repercussions of the crisis. Based on the Committee's right of initiative under the Treaty, on Tuesday 22 June the members of the ECOS Commission adopted proposals presented by Mr Tore Hult, Vice-President of the municipal council of Alingsås (SE/PES) aimed at combating poverty and homelessness.

"With the proliferation of precarious situations caused by the current crisis, we expect more and more of our fellow citizens to face the risk of social exclusion. This in turn can quickly lead to loss of housing and a descent into extreme poverty. This year, more than ever, the European Union must seize the bull by the horns" the rapporteur said. The CoR rapporteur believes that the European institutions need to go beyond their traditional coordinating role and *"be more active in supporting progress and monitoring measures taken. More resources should be earmarked for training when planning for the next Structural Fund period."*

Consult the CoR draft opinion, which is to be submitted to the plenary session of 6-7 October 2010 for adoption.
<http://www.cor.europa.eu/>

Survey: impact of the crisis and responses of URBACT cities



The economic crisis has dramatically altered the context in which the 44 URBACT projects are operating. As a response URBACT launched a study on the impact of the economic crisis and the responses developed by the URBACT II partner cities to address the recession. The report presents the results of the survey.

The survey forms part of a broader package of work on cities and the crisis being undertaken by the URBACT programme. URBACT has a dedicated webpage 'Economic Crisis: Cities' Responses and Resources' to bring to light and display resources and tools to support local practitioners.

Find out more at www.urbact.eu

Achieving energy efficiency in housing: the way forward

The European Commission is due to propose a new EU Energy Efficiency Strategy, at the end of 2010. It is expected that the Strategy will prioritize measures which can help to boost energy efficiency in existing buildings.

In the meantime, in the framework of POWER HOUSE EUROPE some of the main stumbling blocks on the path to increasing refurbishment rates for public, cooperative and social housing providers have been identified and published in the report: Achieving energy efficiency in Housing- The way forward. Overcoming these stumbling blocks will be vital if the EU strategic goals are to be met.

To find out more about energy efficiency and housing, visit:
<http://www.powerhouseeurope.eu>



Neighbours' Day 2010 a big success

This year marked the 10th anniversary of Neighbours' Day since it was launched in Paris, in 2000. 9 million citizens took part all around the world!

neighbours' day

On the 28th of May 2010, 1200 city council, housing association and associations partners in 20 EU countries celebrated Neighbours' Day. Members of CECODHAS led the initiative in England, Italy, Spain, Ireland and Portugal: here are some examples of neighbours' celebrations from around Europe.

Dozens of neighbours became new friends at Sheperds Bush Housing Group Neighbours' Day celebration at Clifford Haigh House, in London, **England**.



Making friends with neighbours in Clifford Haigh House, London

Miss Lumturi Brshaj, who's lived at Clifford Haigh House for ten years, said: "I've spent time with people I've only ever said hello to and have made two new friends". SBHG's officer Jane Sheehan said: "Making friends with neighbours makes a really big difference. It builds a sense of community and helps people feel they belong. That's important anywhere but especially in a city like London where people can feel isolated. We help our residents celebrate Neighbours' Day every year as it's a perfect way to have fun and make new friends."

People all over **Ireland** were encouraged to get to know each other better on Friday 28th May as part of European Neighbours' Day promoted by the Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH). One of the biggest Neighbours' Day gatherings was held in the south Dublin county village of Stepside where three housing associations – Cluid, Sonas and Hail – joined together in the grounds of The Belfry, Parkview, to present an open air event with games, sports, children's entertainment and food. This is a mixed development with private and social housing and the aim is to encourage residents to get to know one another. Mr Donal McManus, ICSH Executive Director, said: "European Neighbours' Day is about bringing everyone in the community together, whether they are living in social housing or private housing. It is a chance to challenge social segregation, which is why

the Irish Council for Social Housing got involved." He added: "The ICSH joined with our European partners in promoting this day to highlight the importance of knowing your neighbour. It is the most basic step to improving our communities and to encouraging cohesion. "



Families celebrating Neighbours' Day in Stepside, Ireland

In **Italy**, 18 public social housing companies throughout the country, members of the federation FederCasa, organised neighbourhood events in cooperation with municipalities.



Children playing at a neighbourhood party in Rovigo, Italy

Change the way you relate with the others and with the area surround you – know that you are not alone, that somebody else is there to help you, to be helped, to share friendship... feel at home in your neighbourhood! This was the motto that gathered together more than 30.000 neighbours in 30 cities all around **Portugal**. "Portugal was, this year, the first to celebrate the Neighbor's Day on the 25th of May, and many informal

meals with music and happiness around the tables were building bridges to the future" said Joao Carvalhosa, head of international relations at CECODHAS Portugal. "Informal neighbours' groups are created and the relation with the area is changing, increasing the notion of belonging and making people aware of their responsibility in contribute to the common well", he added.

Celebrated on Friday 28th May by several million people in Europe, Neighbours' Day continues its world tour until September! Check out the Neighbours' Day website at: www.european-neighbours-day.com/

Open calls & Deadlines

World Habitat Awards 2010: call for entries now open!

The competition for the 25th edition of World Habitat Awards, organised by the Building and Social Housing Foundation together with UNHABITAT is now open.

Projects & approaches are sought that...

- Demonstrate practical, innovative and sustainable solutions to current housing issues faced by countries of the global South as well as the North.
- Can be transferred or adapted for use as appropriate.
- View the term 'habitat' from a broad perspective and bring other benefits as well, such as energy or water saving, income generation, social inclusion, community and individual empowerment, capacity building or education.

The World Habitat Awards competition has a two-stage entry process: stage I submissions need only comprise a summary of the key aspects of the project. From these preliminary submissions, ten projects are selected by an Assessment Committee to go forward to Stage II of the competition.



Image from the project winner of 2009 award, Caprichando a Morada (Brazil)

All Stage I submissions must be received **by 1st November 2010**. For further information, please visit www.worldhabitatawards.org/

First European Local Authorities Competition on Good Practices on the Support for Migrant Elders

The European Local Authorities' Competition of Good Practices on the Support for Migrant Elders' Initiatives will award municipalities for their innovative initiatives in the mutual integration of elderly migrants.

The Ministry for Intergenerational Affairs, Family, Women and Integration of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) have launched the competition, in partnership with the European Union Committee of the Regions.

Amongst the different projects which can be submitted as entries for the award, there are initiatives for the improvement of the quality of life of elderly persons with a migrant background in the field of housing.

Deadline for application is **30 September 2010**.

The application package is available at the following website: www.aktioncourage.org

For further information please contact Cornelia Schröder at: c.schroeder@aktioncourage.org

National Alert

Dutch Parliament votes motion about SGI and social housing

The new Dutch parliamentarians from the Housing Commission have taken a firm stance towards the Minister during the discussion about the implementation of the EU Decision on Services of General Economic Interest and Dutch social housing.

Dutch members of parliament have clearly stated social housing should be a national subject. They have strong reasons to believe the proposed income ceiling is not appropriate for the Dutch situation and could harm the housing market as a whole. 'The introduction of the ministerial regulation by October 1, 2010, could significantly decrease the choices of households with low average incomes - including the elderly, young and dependent - on a good and affordable housing and could put the functioning of the housing market as a whole under pressure', the motion reads.

Unlike the Minister, members of parliament are not convinced the European Commission won't approve a higher income ceiling for social housing in the light of those difficulties. They stressed that 'the European Commission through its EU Commissioner Andor explicitly stated that no income ceiling was set by the EU for access to social housing and thus recognizes that the target group of social housing is a national consideration'.

The motion was voted by a vast majority on the first of July. Aedes is pleased with this (temporary) result and the broad political and social support behind it. It is not clear yet

how the Minister will react to this motion. But the unambiguous terms will make it hard to ignore.

For further information please contact S.Garnier@aedes.nl

Sweden: New law on municipal housing companies approved

The Riksdag (Swedish Parliament) approved the new Public Municipal Housing Companies Act on the 22nd of June 2010. Together with recent amendments to the rent-setting system, the new law represents a turning point for public housing in Sweden.

Following the new regulation, companies should run their operation on businesslike principles, a deviation from the principles embodied in the Local Government Act requiring operations to be run on a cost price basis and preventing undertakings from being run for profit. At the same time, the Act clarifies that a businesslike perspective is compatible with active social responsibility.

A provision was also introduced limiting the distributions of surpluses made by housing companies. Municipal authorities are also entitled to a certain level of compensation for capital contributed, but the distribution may not exceed half of the previous year's profits. These restrictions do not apply to any surplus from the previous year provided this surplus is carried over to another housing company within the same group or used for certain measures within the framework of the municipality's responsibility for supply housing. Furthermore, half of any gains made on property sales may be distributed.

At the same time, the Riksdag decided to introduce amendments to the Tenancy Act. The role of the public housing companies in setting the standard for rents is replaced by a normative role for rents that are negotiated collectively. A safeguard is also introduced to counteract significant rent increases having a rapid impact. These new provisions will enter into force on 1 January 2011, at which time the current Act will be repealed.

"We finally have sustainable rules for the public housing sector in Sweden following many years of discussions and inquiries. The next step is for municipal authorities to give housing companies clear owner directives that are adapted to these new rules," said Kurt Eliasson, CEO of the Swedish Association of Municipal Housing Companies (SABO). Strategic owner directives form the basis for municipal housing companies being able to draw up operating and business plans that benefit both owners and tenants. In the directives, municipal authorities must specify the purpose of ownership, the role that municipal housing companies will assume in the *district and the required returns imposed on the company*. *"The best owner directives will be those produced jointly by municipal authorities and companies. We will sup-*

port the housing companies in this work so that they will be well prepared when the new act enters into force," said Kurt Eliasson.

For more information, please contact Johanna Ode, Head of International Affairs at SABO, johanna.ode@sabo.se

Northern Ireland: NIHE Chief Executive honoured with and Order of the British Empire

Paddy McIntyre, Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), has been honoured with an OBE (Order of the British Empire) in the 2010 Queen's Birthday Honours.



On behalf of the whole CECODHAS HOUSING EUROPE 'family', we would like to congratulate Paddy on this much deserved award.

"This is a fitting recognition of the dedicated and professional leadership Paddy brings to our organisation and a fitting tribute to his vision and commitment to those most vulnerable in society" commented Brian Rowntree, Chairman of NIHE.

Paddy McIntyre said receiving the award *"I am delighted to receive this honour. I have been privileged to have been part of an organisation which for almost four decades has given so much, providing decent homes, building sustainable communities and improving people's lives. This has been achieved thanks to the dedication, professionalism and hard work of my many colleagues over the years"*.

England: Housing associations face tough challenges as Chancellor delivers Emergency Budget

On the 22nd of June, the Chancellor of the Exchequer unveiled an Emergency Budget which significantly accelerated the Government's plans to address the difficult fiscal position and reduction of the structural deficit. The measures announced by the Chancellor mean that an additional £32 billion a year in spending reductions will be found by 2014, -15 compared to the previous government's plans. The Chancellor also confirmed that the results of the Comprehensive Spending Review will be announced on 20 October 2010.

The National Housing Federation (NHF), welcomed the Government's apparent decision to rule out any further cuts to capital investment projects this year. Housing pro-

viders not only offer exceptional value for money but the construction of housing delivers the range of economic benefits that the Government has indicated it wishes to support. However, the Chancellor announced that unprotected Departmental budgets, which would include Communities and Local Government, could see Budget cuts of at least 25% between 2011-12 and 2014 -15.



Housing campaigners wear face masks of Cameron, Clegg, Osborne and Pickles on Budget Day

This would have severe implications for the housing budget and could result in thousands of affordable homes not being built. The Federation warned the nation's affordable housing crisis will plumb new depths as a result – with housing waiting lists already standing at a record 4.5 million. Thousands of jobs in construction and related fields could also be lost or not be created. Mr David Orr, Chief Executive of NHF, said: *'We understand the Chancellor is faced with some difficult and painful decisions of where the axe should fall. However, we are in the midst of the worst housing crisis this country has seen in generations, with a record 4.5 million people languishing on housing waiting lists and 2.6 million people trapped in overcrowded housing. We simply cannot afford to stop building new homes and turn our backs on millions of hard up families. These cuts will hit the poorest hardest and could condemn an entire generation to living in substandard housing.'*

Furthermore, the Chancellor spoke of the Housing Benefit bill being out of control and of the need to cap how much benefit was paid to individual households through restricting local housing allowances, which currently only apply in the private rented sector. The Budget Report gives more detail and announces that the local housing allowance will be set from October 2011 on the 30th percentile of local rents, though it will be up-rated in line with the consumer price index.

The report goes on to announce that Local Housing Allowance will be capped at £250 per week for a one bedroom property, £290 per week for a two bedroom property, £340 per week for a three bedroom property and £400 per week for four bedrooms and more. In his speech the Chan-

cellor also spoke of the need to limit Housing Benefit for those living in social housing to appropriately sized accommodation.

The red book also announces that Housing Benefit will be reduced from April 2013 to 90% of the initial award after 12 months for claimants receiving Job Seekers Allowance. The Federation warns that this could push people into severe hardship and debt if they have to top up their rent from their other benefits or sources.

For further information: www.housing.org.uk

France: 'J'aime les HLM'!

The associations Catholic Relief, Amnesty International and ATD Fourth World have launched the mobilization campaign 'J'aime les HLM' (I love social housing).

Citizens are encouraged to sign a letter calling on local authorities to take appropriate measures to guarantee access to decent and affordable housing for vulnerable households, and to send it to their mayor.



More information on this initiative can be found on the website of ATD Quart Monde France: <http://www.atd-quartmonde.fr/>

Research & Publications

Observatory briefing on the impact of the crisis

CECODHAS HOUSING EUROPE Observatory recently released a new research briefing on the Impact of the crisis on housing in the EU. The briefing presents some of the major trends in Europe which are directly linked with the financial, economic and real estate crisis which hit Europe and the rest of the world since 2008. It provides up to date figures on housing prices, supply and transactions at the

European level. Drawing mainly from 3 country examples (England, Ireland and Spain) it also attempts to make some hypothesis on possible impacts of the crisis on the social housing sector.

The next Observatory Briefing will focus on the issue of housing needs, and it will be published in September 2010.

For further information on the Observatory briefing series, please contact alice.pittini@cecodhas.org



SAVE THE DATE! 27 October, Brussels **The crisis and the EU responses: Implications for housing**

The economic crisis is driving policy change in the field of housing in the EU, with on the one hand housing markets at the root of the financial downturn and on the other increased investment in public housing used in many EU countries to revive the economy. In the meantime, public spending cuts in 2010 mean that all governments are looking at alternative ways to finance housing policies. What has not changed on the landscape however, are the unmet housing needs, with housing prices remaining high and affordability of housing continuing to be one of the most pressing unresolved social issues.

This conference will look at how the EU policy landscape has changed over the last 5 years with regards its interactions with housing policies and how those interactions will be reinforced within the framework of EU 2020. It will focus on changes in EU budget (opening of Structural Funds...); the emergence of an EU energy policy with the adoption of the Climate package (including all measures linked to energy efficiency) and outline the impact of the EU legal framework and changes implied by the Lisbon Treaty as well as the contribution of housing to the fight against poverty as one of the pillars of the EU 2020 strategy.

What the EU can and should do and what the EU can't or should not do will be at the heart of the discussion between experts, practitioners and decision makers.

For further information, please contact alessandro.cesale@cecodhas.org

After the summer, CECODHAS Housing Europe Newsflash will be back with a brand new look designed to match our new website, which will soon be available at www.housingeurope.eu.

CECODHAS HOUSING EUROPE events

16-17 September, Brussels

CECODHAS Housing Europe Internal Meetings: Management Board, Working Groups meetings, seminar on Evaluation of State Aid decision in each country

27-28 September, Strasbourg, France

POWER HOUSE EUROPE Meeting

27 October, Brussels

Conference: The crisis and the EU responses: Implications for housing

28-29 October, Brussels

CECODHAS Housing Europe Internal Meetings: Strategic seminar, Executive Committee, Management Board

Other events of interest

13-14 September, Budapest, Hungary

Effects of demographic change on urban structures
EUKN 2010 Conference (www.eukn.org)

17 September, Budapest, Hungary

Understanding Homelessness and Housing Exclusion in the New European Context (www.feantsa.org)

1-3 October, Prague, Czech Republic

International Union of Tenants annual congress

23-24 November, Brussels

Environment as a tool for Social Cohesion
European Conference of the Belgian Presidency