

International Social Housing Festival 2025

DUBLIN, IRELAND

FESTIVAL REPORT



ISHF INTERNATIONAL
SOCIAL HOUSING
FESTIVAL
4-6 JUNE 2025 DUBLIN, IRELAND

A FESTIVAL OF IDEAS

At the 2025 International Social Housing Festival, more than 2,400 people from 35 countries covering six continents joined 350 events in Dublin, Ireland. But the festival is more than the sum of these numbers; in bringing together social and affordable housing providers, policymakers, researchers, city authorities, urbanists, architects and activists, it creates the momentum to make things better.

Our hosts in Ireland infused the festival with an important part of their culture: the art of storytelling. While participants learned about new (and were reminded of old) ideas, research, and practices, we also learnt about each other – our individual and community stories, and how they shape our present and future. In this edition of the festival, the voices of social housing residents were clear and resounding. This is an important element that will remain with the festival as it continues on to Lisbon in 2027.

The Housing Europe network made an important contribution to the festival, with members and partners organising nearly 40 events. We also held our annual conference and general assembly during the festival. Many of these events are covered in these pages.

We hosted a record number of sessions at this edition of the festival because we were determined to present the widest possible variety of viewpoints on a hugely complex and detailed issue. At the Irish Council for Social Housing - like our members, approved housing bodies - we are well aware of the realities facing the social housing sector and we wanted everyone to hear all of these voices from Ireland and abroad so we can understand how the social housing experience can be made better for everyone involved.

This report gives a brief overview of the festival and some of the Housing Europe network events.



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2452

DELEGATES

79

COUNTRIES

6

CONTINENTS



WEDNES

Our first keynote focused, importantly, on poverty, housing and homelessness with powerful and deeply personal insights from Professor Katriona O'Sullivan. Katriona says housing gave her an opportunity to feel secure and build love. It's the base from which all else fails or from which everything grows.

DAY

The evening's social Story Slam social event brought delegates 'home', and in the best possible way. Delegate storytellers shaped personal narratives and comic anecdotes of shared homes in early adulthood; buying that first home and giving birth to your children in it; early childhood experiences without love and care and, years later, discovering what home can be, mending broken ties and coming home. These meaningful insights articulated the bonds that are shaped through secure housing and supportive families and communities. This is the mortar, without which everything crumbles.

'C'mere till I tell ya!': Transformative Tales of Tenant and Community Engagement featured tenants and community advocates leading lively workshops on best practices in fostering vibrant, cohesive neighbourhoods.

The festival hosted the European Responsible Housing Awards, recognising exemplary projects shaping inclusive, sustainable communities.

The EIB Group took part with their director Tanguy Desrousseaux leading a "fireside chat" with Frank Allen of the Housing Finance Agency and Kathleen Cottier of Fold Housing, highlighting €750 million in loans over eight years that delivered more than 5,000 affordable homes and 550 energy-upgraded houses in Ireland.





EUROPEAN RESPONSIBLE HOUSING AWARDS

CELEBRATING INNOVATION, INCLUSION AND IMPACT: THE EUROPEAN RESPONSIBLE HOUSING AWARDS 2025

The European Responsible Housing Awards (ERHA) once again celebrated excellence in public, cooperative, and social housing across Europe. With 82 submissions from 12 countries, the Awards showcased inspiring projects that combine affordability, innovation, community engagement, and sustainability. The winning project in the Management Excellence for Housing Affordability category, Stockholmshusen, impressed the jury with its collaborative approach between housing companies and contractors, significantly accelerating delivery while cutting costs. As Matthew Baldwin of the European Commission remarked,

“This is the kind of scale-up strategy we need—combining affordability, inclusion, and construction innovation.”

In the More than a Roof category, Barcelona’s Sostre Cívica stood out with its cooperative, right-of-use model that empowers residents through self-governance and locks in affordability across generations. Andrea Colantonio of the EIB stressed that traditional approaches alone won’t meet Europe’s housing needs, highlighting the need for bold, systemic change. The Housing Europe Responsible Housing Finance Working Group plays a vital role in helping promising ideas take shape. Sostre Cívica, winner of the More than a Roof category, is one example of how the group’s ecosystem can support innovative housing models on their journey to impact.

All winning and finalist projects
are featured in the 2025 ERHA
Handbook – now available at
www.responsiblehousing.eu

The Agents of Just Green Transition award went to Wientalterrassse in Vienna for its fossil-free energy model and inclusive design. The project exemplifies how sustainability and affordability can go hand in hand, with intergenerational living and shared spaces supporting social cohesion.

MatosinhosHabit's Gestor Entrada initiative in Portugal won for Building Strategic Alliances, showing how involving residents in the governance of their buildings improves safety, trust, and neighbourhood life. As the jury put it,

“When people are involved in decisions, everything works better.”

In the Going the Extra Mile for Safe and Sound Living category, Antin Résidences was recognised for embedding health and well-being into social housing design. Behind this project lies a deeper mission of deinstitutionalisation and human-centred care, echoing Bent Madsen's message:

“It's all about people.”

Each initiative reflects how responsible housing goes beyond bricks and mortar—it builds resilience, fairness, and lasting community impact.





EQUALHOUSE: THE STORY OF HOUSING INEQUALITY AND SOLUTIONS

This event introduced EqualHouse, a first-of-its-kind pan-European initiative mapping the key drivers of housing inequality in the EU and UK, while showcasing innovative policies tackling the crisis. This initiative will equip governments, housing providers, and researchers with the insights needed to drive meaningful change. More on EqualHouse

Lead academics from a variety of backgrounds joined a discussion with Housing Europe, the International Union of Tenants, and FEANTSA, who are helping to shape the EU's housing agenda.

Participants considered how and why the 'housing crisis' is has different impacts and hits some harder than others. A key piece of research analysing housing 'precariousness' across EU Member States and UK based on households and income data was presented, and participants reflected how the equal house project, combining state of the art academic research with inputs from a wide community of policymakers and practitioners, can feed into the work of the European Commission.

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#ISHF2024 SOCIALHOUSINGFESTIVAL.EU

HOUSING EUROPE

ICSH Irish Council for Social Housing

Co-operative housing Ireland

Aims of EqualHouse

EqualHouse is designed to identify the most significant dimensions of housing inequality across Europe, clarify their scale, form, causes and consequences and provide local, regional, national and European policymakers with **robust guidance** on how to address these inequalities in a **sustainable, inclusive and affordable way**.

EqualHouse will:

- analyse the scale, form and dynamics of housing inequality across the EU27 and UK, identify its **new, acute and intersectional forms** and explore its interaction with income and wealth inequality.
- examine the **policy, regulatory, service and finance drivers** of (and solutions to) housing inequality, in both national and international perspective.
- Propose solutions to address **acute, intractable and new forms** of housing inequality such as **unaffordability, homelessness among refugees and migrants, labour market related housing inequalities and energy poverty**.

EqualHouse

ISHF INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL HOUSING FESTIVAL



PROMOTION AND MANAGEMENT OF HOUSING FOR THE ELDERLY

The session Promotion and Management of Housing for the Elderly (AVS) explored two housing models in Málaga designed for independent seniors aged 65 and over: the renovated Corralón Santa Sofía and the newly built Calle Carril. Both projects were co-designed with future residents and aim to foster autonomy, social interaction, and healthy ageing. Santa Sofía preserved the charm of an old house with shared green spaces, while Calle Carril added modern safety features like fire and flood sensors, digital connectivity, and training in online tools. Common areas in both support physical activity and light administrative help.

CITY OF PROXIMITY, FROM NARRATIVE TO PRACTICE: SOCIAL HOUSING DISTRICTS AS A GROUND FOR EXPERIMENTATION

This workshop was an opportunity to explore in an interactive format the potential for applying the 15 minute city approach to social housing districts. Through the use of personas and a fictional city map participants were encouraged to come up to solutions to challenges perceived by residents and exploring the potential of including multi-purpose spaces in social housing districts where tenants and the broader community can hold joint activities and accessing essential services, leisure and culture.





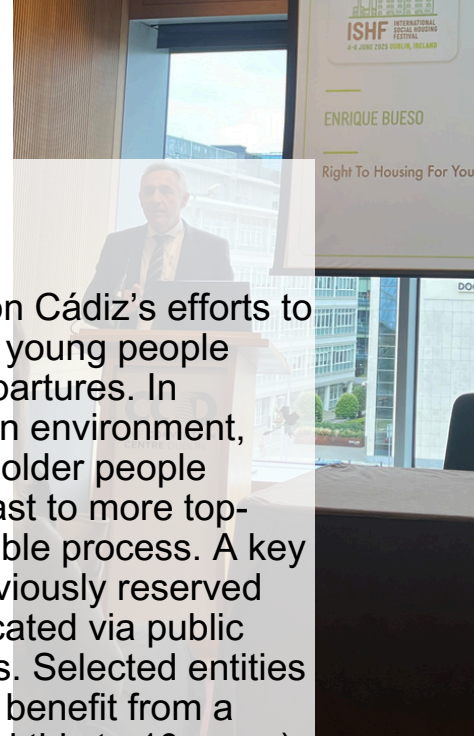
RIGHT TO HOUSING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The session Right to Housing for Young People focused on Cádiz's efforts to address the sharp decline in its youth population—35,000 young people have left the city in recent years, making up 60% of all departures. In response, the city is rethinking its housing policy and urban environment, with 38 new projects underway—half aimed at young and older people through an inclusive, intergenerational approach. In contrast to more top-down models, Cádiz follows a more collaborative and flexible process. A key initiative involves repurposing 26 vacant public plots—previously reserved for schools or hospitals—for youth housing, with land allocated via public tenders open to cooperatives, social, or private developers. Selected entities receive the land for free for 75 years, while young tenants benefit from a renewable 7-year lease system (with discussions to extend this to 10 years) to ensure rotation and broader access.

The discussion highlighted the structural barriers to youth emancipation: only 16% of young people in Spain can afford to live independently — far below the EU average of 31% — with up to 90% of their income going toward rent. A new help-to-buy scheme was introduced to ease access to homeownership by removing the need to save the usual 20% down payment. To match demand — 54% of applicants seek one-bedroom apartments — the city is promoting 34 m². Overall, the strategy aims not only to increase access to housing but also to reshape public space and urban life to support young people's right to stay, live, and thrive in Cádiz.

THE AMERICA GROUND: A STORY OF COMMUNITY-LED REGENERATION

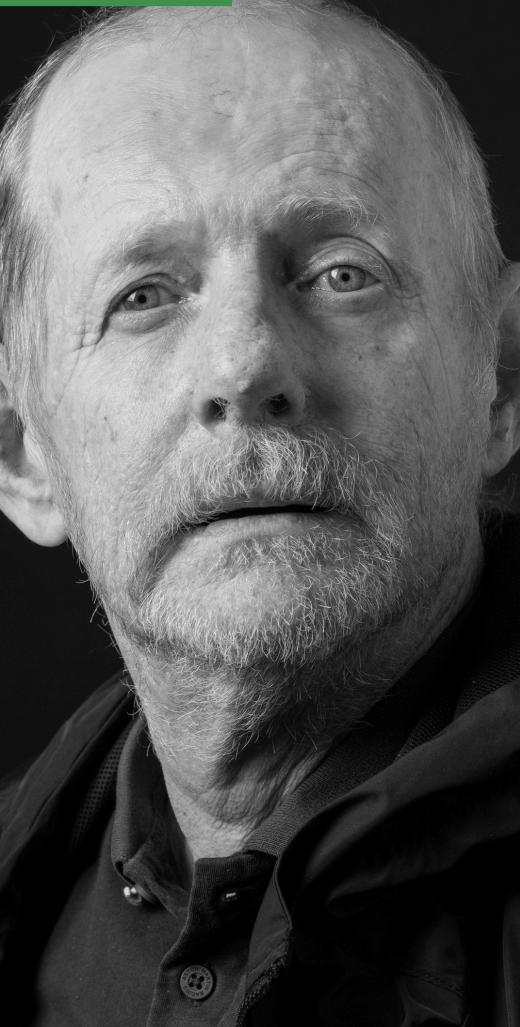
America Ground is the name of a small triangular stretch of coastal land in Hastings, UK. Originally outside the town, in the 19th century this no man's land became home to a growing number of workers who settled there creating a self-sufficient district resisting several subsequent attempts to take over and 'legalise' property - until residents were eventually evicted. It remains a symbol of rebellion and struggle for freedom and housing rights. Its heritage was proudly taken up by Hastings Commons, a community land trust established by activists in recent years, one that keeps growing by taking over derelict spaces and turning them into places for living and community activities.





From house to Home

The stories of Imelda Doyle, Norbert Hanlon, Lynne Hooper, Terry Kearney, Sadie Larkin, and Antoinette Reid





From house to Home

An Oral History Collection of Tenants Stories in Social Housing in Dublin

The Irish Council for Social Housing collaborated with Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority of Ireland on an intentional impact project for this year's festival. One element of this is the Oral History Project collecting tenant stories of social housing in Dublin. The project provides a platform for tenants' stories and offers delegates an insight into tenants' experiences.

We collected six stories from tenants in social housing in Dublin in order to begin a repository of such tales. We recorded face-to-face interviews with tenants, and produced an Oral History Toolkit to ensure that from this point forward, tenants' experiences will be front and centre of every International Social Housing Festival.

These interviews have now been preserved as a permanent resource on the International Social Housing Festival website and through the toolkit, will be added to at each subsequent iteration of the ISHF.

socialhousingfestival.eu/oralhistory



The affordable housing initiative days



As a dedicated two-day programme within the International Social Housing Festival in Dublin, the Affordable Housing Initiative (AHI) Days brought together housing pioneers, experts, and city representatives from across Europe. Through interactive workshops, tailored advisory sessions, and study visits, participants explored practical approaches to delivering inclusive, affordable, and sustainable housing at district scale. The event fostered knowledge exchange, hands-on learning, and new connections across the European housing community.

The Affordable Housing Initiative European Partnership is driving a transformation, creating and regenerating neighbourhoods that are inclusive, energy-efficient, and environmentally sustainable, while ensuring affordability remains at the core.

Led by Housing Europe in collaboration with five key partners and co-funded by the European Union, the initiative is the point of reference for EU's first Affordable Housing Plan, a just Renovation Wave and New European Bauhaus.

Through a tailored Accelerator Programme, the partnership offers organisations across Europe guidance on technical and financial solutions, mentorship, and opportunities for peer-to-peer learning.

Study visits, workshops, seminars, and online classes empower participants with the skills, knowledge, and resources to combat energy poverty, promote social inclusion and cohesion, ensure long-term affordability of newly built or renovated homes, and reduce emissions from residential buildings.

shape-affordablehousing.eu

MORE THAN RENOVATION: NEIGHBOURHOOD REGENERATION. THE DROP PROJECT FINAL CONFERENCE

This session explored how art, culture, community engagement, and digital innovation are driving urban regeneration across Europe. Hear from cities like Matera (Italy), Elva (Estonia), and Ermua (Spain) on cultural placemaking, e-governance, and neighbourhood renewal.

We shared an integrated approach combining social, environmental, and economic strategies, and showcase other pioneering districts. Expect practical insights on how creativity, community, and inclusive planning lead to better outcomes.



A HIGH-LEVEL CALL FOR PEOPLE-CENTRED RENOVATION

Bent Madsen, President of Housing Europe, opened the session with a call to rethink renovation:

"This is not just about insulation—it's about health, education, and well-being."

Citing Denmark's Aalborg model, he emphasised the importance of tenant participation and the role of social housing providers in delivering deep societal impact.

Matthew Baldwin, Head of the European Commission's Housing Taskforce, highlighted the new Affordable Housing Initiative and Housing Europe's leadership:

"We're learning from social housing leaders like Aalborg and L'Autre Soie. It's time to scale these efforts—coops, housing providers, and even private homeowners all have a role to play."

DROP PROJECT: REAL STORIES FROM REAL NEIGHBOURHOODS

Silvia Urra Uriarte of Tecnalia introduced the drOp methodology—a co-governance framework combining cultural innovation, digitalisation, and local economic development to regenerate social housing districts. This people-first approach has been tested across Europe, generating local impact and transnational insights.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM PEER CITIES INCLUDED:

- **Carlo Feretti (Materahub, Italy):** From European Capital of Culture to social housing innovator, Matera is placing citizens at the centre of decision-making. The co-governance model piloted in Matera enables participatory planning and local task forces that act as democratic spaces for urban transformation.
- **Riccardo Coletta & Paola Zerilli (SUPERSHINE project):** Demonstrated how PPP models and bottom-up engagement are making energy-efficient renovation viable and profitable. Their work shows how financing can serve both public and private interests in the social housing sector.
- **Rossana Zaccaria (President, Legacoop Abitanti):** Representing the context of cooperative housing, she showcased how Italian housing cooperatives are innovating through "neomutualism"—blending culture, welfare, and architecture. Examples included citizen-run libraries, artistic regeneration, and social bookshops that turn housing into community anchors.
- **Marta Lekue (Ermua Municipality):** Shared a success story of a dormant urban space turned into a shared garden through resident-led action—proof that empowered communities make transformation tangible.
- **Jaanika Saar & Sirli Pippa (Elva Municipality, Estonia):** Highlighted the Nooruse pilot where digital tools—mapping, surveys, participatory budgeting—accelerated community engagement. Their key insight: "Digital tools work best when local spark persons help connect the dots."
- **Graziella Roccella (Planet Smart City):** Demonstrated how Citizen Labs—supported by gamified apps—can drive sustainable behaviour and build community in affordable housing settings.
- **Patricia Astorgano (Codema – Dublin's Energy Agency):** Presented digital applications for citizen engagement, aligned with the REGEN project, showing how digital tools support democratic urban planning in regeneration contexts.

SOCIAL HOUSING AT THE CORE OF JUST TRANSITION

The conference reaffirmed Housing Europe's belief that social housing is not only a tool for climate mitigation, but also a vehicle for social and economic cohesion. From community libraries to energy communities, the examples shared during the drOp final event show how social housing providers are catalysts of inclusive change.



The Dragon's Den: Which technologies to choose?



Realising the Renovation Wave demands a balance between tried and tested scalable solutions, long-term planning, risk management and economic analysis. A considerable number of “best technologies available” for renovation processes has been presented in public fora in the last decade. However, the notion which one is best for a specific setting is most of the times complicated. This, coupled with limited budgets, lack of available workers and diverse preferences, makes the decision-making task of the housing manager challenging.

Deconstructing the notion of ‘best technologies’, this session focused instead on what technically and economically feasible technologies can be deployed in each context to maximize impact. 4 experts from a select number of countries (the “Dragons”) present their main decarbonisation challenges. An expert presents their technology as a specific energy transition solution for those challenges.

DRAGONS' CHALLENGES

GERMANY

Ingrid Vogler, Head of Energy and Technology at Germany's DdW, presented a sobering assessment of her country's experience. While Germany has made progress – saving 111 million tons of greenhouse gases by 2022 – the costs have been substantial. Each ton of CO₂ reduced through comprehensive renovations has required subsidies averaging €1,000, with some measures costing several thousand euros per ton. "The harsh truth," Vogler explained, "is that deep energy renovations for all buildings are simply unaffordable." Instead, Germany is shifting its strategy to focus on measures that deliver the greatest emissions reductions per euro invested. This means prioritizing heat pump installations over insulation in many cases, while implementing smart grid technologies to manage electricity demand.

SWEDEN

Sofia Hansdotter from Public Housing Sweden outlined her country's ambitious goal to halve the climate impact of housing within a decade. "We're moving beyond pilot projects," she stressed. "The challenge now is scaling proven solutions across our entire housing stock." Sweden's approach focuses on lifecycle cost-effectiveness, innovative use of building materials, and performance-based procurement that ties contracts to measurable outcomes in energy efficiency and accessibility. Hansdotter emphasised the need to "rethink how we use our resources" through circular economy principles in both construction and renovation.

NETHERLANDS

Robin van Leijen of the Netherlands' AEDES painted a picture of a country caught between progress and roadblocks. While insulation efforts have been successful, the transition from natural gas remains fraught with challenges. "Heat pumps face three major barriers," van Leijen explained. "Grid capacity limitations, technical challenges in multi-unit buildings, and high maintenance costs that many housing associations can't sustain." District heating networks, often touted as the solution, are developing too slowly due to regulatory hurdles and uncertain economics.

The human dimension looms large in the Dutch approach. "Tenants will only support the energy transition if they see immediate benefits to their wallets," van Leijen noted. "Renewable heating must be cheaper than gas, plain and simple."

NORTHERN IRELAND

Seamus Leheny from Northern Ireland's housing federation brought a builder's perspective to the discussion. "Decarbonizing housing is like assembling a Lego set," he said. "If you don't follow the right sequence, the whole structure becomes unstable." Leheny stressed four critical questions for any retrofit project:

- Is this the right technology for this building?
- Are we implementing solutions in the optimal order?
- How will we measure success?
- What unintended consequences might emerge?



TECHNOLOGY PITCHES

Four pitchers presented solutions to accelerate decarbonisation:

- Carbery Housing addressed the challenges of retrofitting rural social housing. Their Project RedWolf combines standalone solar panels with AI-driven smart meters to achieve B2 energy ratings without deep retrofits. By offsetting costs with solar energy, the system reduces reliance on fossil fuels and minimizes disruption to tenants.
- Respond Housing showcased a passive housing model, prioritizing design adaptations (e.g., leveraging sunlight and wind patterns) alongside high-performance insulation, airtight construction, and heat recovery ventilation. Their approach not only lowers energy costs for tenants but also reduces strain on the grid and improves indoor air quality.
- Philipp Stern, Partner at the Institute of Building Research & Innovation in Vienna championed heat pumps as today's most efficient heating tech - 3.8x more efficient than boilers with 72% lower emissions. While noting higher upfront costs, he highlighted long-term savings and dual heating/cooling capabilities. Success requires proper engineering, "heat-as-a-service" models, and regular maintenance.
- Sarah Blake, Geological Survey Ireland pitched geothermal as a constant, sustainable heat source, leveraging oil/gas drilling tech to access underground heat at 1.5-3km depths. Though requiring major initial investment for district-scale systems, she emphasized their carbon-free operation and long lifespans once installed.



Creating Connections: Strategies for Meaningful Resident Engagement

This interactive workshop covered how to develop successful resident engagement strategies. Participants gained practical skills to understand diverse resident needs, prioritise engagement tools, and design communication and contingency plans, all through a human-centred approach informed by expert insights and best practices.

Site visit: New Dolphin Park, Design Principles for the Creation of ‘Healthy Homes’ and Social Inclusion for the Ageing Population

The study visit to New Dolphin Park was part of the AHI days learning programme but was also open to regular delegates from the ISHF. Participants were welcomed onsite by the hosting organisation, Fold Housing (owner and manager of the complex), along with the co-organisers, Reddy Architecture and Housing Europe.

After a light lunch kindly provided by Fold Housing at the local community café, during which they got to know each other, participants were divided into small groups for guided tours. who gave an accurate picture of the construction of New Dolphin Park as part of the wider regeneration of the social housing estate Dolphin Barn in Rialto, Dublin. The area was renowned for alcohol and substance abuse in the 1980s and 1990s, but today it is still quite a poor neighbourhood.

The new complex was purposefully designed to accommodate elderly residents from the local area. The design incorporates features that address mobility challenges, enabling residents to live independently while benefiting from a supportive community environment. The layout and amenities of the apartments reflect a commitment to accessibility, safety, and comfort. For example, rooms are equipped with smart devices that can be activated in different ways to accommodate the mobility conditions of residents (e.g., by pressing a button or by pulling a string, useful in case of a fall) which connect them to a call centre active 24/7 that will triage and call the emergency services or the family.

During the visit, participants had the chance to speak directly to some of the residents, who opened them the doors of their apartments and shared their personal stories which led them to New Dolphin Park. According to their testimonies, what they appreciated the most was the sense of stability that their new homes offered in terms of quality (good amount of space, brightness and ventilation), price (rent calculation is based on the weekly income of each tenant) and security (the tenancy is for life, as long as they pay the rent and don't engage in antisocial behaviours).

The visit concluded with an informal gathering back at the café, where the daughter of a tenant shared a personal story about how her mother's quality of life had improved significantly after moving from a bedsit in Dolphin Barn to an apartment in New Dolphin Park. Her account highlighted the tangible benefits of the new development for residents. Reddy Architecture also presented the most impactful design elements of the project, emphasising how thoughtful architectural choices can contribute to residents' well-being and independence.

A virtual tour of New Dolphin Park curated by the Affordable Housing Initiative European Partnership will be soon available on the Local Transitions Learning Centre.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

From 2024 to 2026, the Affordable Housing Initiative European Partnership, SHAPE II is receiving funding from the European Union's Single Market Programme under Grant Agreement no. 101191186.



THURS

DAY

Thursday morning's keynote event saw Dr Jenny Schuetz, US professor, economist and author, reflect on the evolution of urban/suburban housing models that has concrete parallels with Ireland. She said we're blocking out future generations in cities in favour of existing housing models and the preferences of established communities. She says that housing affordability isn't a technical or economic issue. It's a political one.

Scholars and planners from the Metropolitan Housing Observatory of Barcelona convened a seminar on the impact of short-term rentals, comparing policies across Barcelona, Lisbon, Vienna, Amsterdam, and Luxembourg. These collaborative sessions aim to produce a shared publication reinforcing pan-European housing policy coordination.

Site visits showcased pioneering housing developments around Dublin, spotlighting innovative co-operative and social housing models aimed at young people, elderly residents, and tenants with disabilities.

It was an immense privilege to have Joanne O'Riordan speaking as our final keynote speaker at the ISHF – International Social Housing Festival 2025 Dublin. She said: 'Our needs are treated as burdens rather than benchmarks. we need a binding legislative standard for the provision of accessible housing. It must work for all people with disabilities.

And there is no publicly available data identifying that the (small) 7% accessible housing target has been met. What's an activist? She asked. 'We don't need a movement of experts.

it's about how we connect to our neighbours and use our skillset. We are here to build an Ireland, not a country of ramps and pity, but a republic of dignity, rights and equal opportunity.'

GUIDING EUROPE HOME

THE POLICY COMPASS FOR A NEW HOUSING PARADIGM HOUSING EUROPE ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2025



In an era where housing has become one of the most pressing political issues, there is a growing momentum behind Europe's efforts to tackle the crisis. While views may remain divided, this moment presents a unique opportunity to return to the core principles of effective housing systems. What are the key ingredients for a housing system that works? What will it take to deliver homes which boost social capital and competitiveness?

European Housing compass, rooted in the work of #Housing2030 and more than 100 best practices, will guide us in exploring strategies for improvement. Through tangible, real-world examples, we will address critical questions: How can we scale up housing solutions effectively? What policy changes are needed to drive lasting change?

Speakers included:

- Prof. Dr. Michelle Norris, Director of the Geary Institute and Full Professor of Social Policy, University College Dublin
- The European Commission's approach to tackling the housing crisis, Matthew Baldwin, Head of Housing Task Force, European Commission
- Anaclaudia Rossbach, Executive Director, UN Habitat
- Prof.dr.ir. Marje Elsinga, professor of Housing Institutions & Governance, TU Delft
- Andrea Colantonio, Lead Economist at the European Investment Bank (EIB), European Investment Bank
- Bent Madsen, President, Housing Europe

Best practices to address common challenges in Member States were covered. This included:

Addressing Demographic changes

- Anna Vincze (Hungary)
- Brian Micalled (Malta)
- Robin van Leijen (The Netherlands)
- Sofia Hansdotter (Sweden)

Climate-resilient housing

- Geert De Pauw (Belgium)
- Jouni Parkkonen (Finland)
- Paul Sarais (France)

Homelessness

- Helena Vaz (Portugal)
- Gerlinde Gutheil-Knopp-Kirchwald (Austria)



**This event has it's
own, detailed report
available here**





THE ABC OF SHARED MOBILITY

Shared mobility is about new ways of travelling. It is all about having access to all kinds of vehicles without the need to own your own. This results in more freedom of choice for users, better affordability of transport, transforming cities into nicer places to live and work as well as reducing emissions. When integrated in social housing, shared mobility can bring a wide range of benefits to providers such as reduced construction costs and more affordable housing, increased land availability and a more affordable mobility offer for tenants. This session introduced participants to the complex world of shared mobility: what it is, what different shared mobility options exist and their differing impacts on space consumption, mobility behaviour, costs and the environment. The session also looked at '10 Golden Rules' for Shared Mobility in Social Housing, based on the experience of the EU-funded project SHARE-North Squared, an Interreg North Sea Region project aiming to integrate shared mobility into housing developments and parking policies.

SITE VISIT: BRINGING SHARED MOBILITY AND SOCIAL HOUSING TO FITZWILLIAM QUAY

Participants visited Fitzwilliam Quay (Ringsend, Dublin 4), led by Fiona Craven Programme Manager at Dublin City Council who introduced an ambitious adaptive reuse project that exemplifies sustainable urban redevelopment. The initiative involves the conversion of an existing office building into 15 high-quality apartments, responding to housing needs while minimising environmental impact.

Located in a designated Decarbonisation Zone, the development is poised to become a model of climate-conscious housing. As part of the transformation, the existing car park will be de-paved and replaced with a shared garden space, including secure bike and e-bike storage for residents. Plans also include the integration of a shared car facility, further encouraging low-carbon mobility choices.

The site is particularly well-served by public transport and sits just 200 metres from a public bike share station. It also benefits from excellent connectivity to the city via a proposed greenway along the River Dodder, which will run directly in front of the development—making active and shared travel practical and attractive for future residents.

The building has already been acquired by the City Council, with a design team currently being appointed. Construction is scheduled to begin in early 2026, setting in motion a project that aligns housing delivery with sustainability, livability, and community-focused design.



SPREADING CLIMATE POSITIVE CIRCULAR COMMUNITIES AROUND EUROPE

A growing movement across Europe is focused on upscaling innovative, climate-positive solutions for social housing through integrated district-level approaches. This effort centers around Climate Positive Circular Communities (CPCCs), which combine circular construction, deep energy renovation, and strong community engagement. Spearheaded by the EU-funded ARV project, CPCCs aim to accelerate the transition to net-zero neighborhoods by offering ready-made, replicable blueprints and services. Pilots in countries like the Netherlands showcase how tailored local support, energy coaching, and inclusive participation can help residents reduce emissions and improve quality of life.

A leading example from Sønderborg, Denmark, demonstrated how smart technologies and resident empowerment can deliver measurable climate benefits in social housing. Technical upgrades — including solar PV, battery storage, and smart thermostats — were paired with innovative financing models to ensure affordability. While efficiency gains were notable, changing energy behavior proved more complex, sparking debate over the balance between central control and resident autonomy. Despite these challenges, the Sønderborg model illustrates the potential for scaling sustainable, tenant-centered renovations across Europe's housing sector.

MAKING THE MOST OUT OF RESPONSIBLE HOUSING FINANCE SUMMIT

This session was designed as a preparatory workshop for the upcoming European Responsible Housing Finance Summit in Prague on November 19th. It brought together experts from Europe, Canada, and the USA to reflect on how to maximise the Summit's impact and ensure broad engagement. The aim was threefold: to encourage other countries to consider hosting future editions, to understand the motivations of different stakeholders in participating, and to identify the key actors and potential benefits for each.

Johanne Philippe, Junior Policy Officer at Housing Europe, presented the work of the European Responsible Housing Finance Working Group, of which the Summit is a flagship activity. Speakers then highlighted why involving a diverse range of stakeholders—from national public finance bodies to local asset managers, social housing providers, private financiers, and institutions managing cost-rental housing—is essential. The discussions stressed that aligning finance with housing goals requires more than funding: it demands strategic coordination, shared learning, and space for all voices in the conversation. The session set the tone for a collaborative, multi-level approach to shaping housing finance systems that work in practice.



HOUSING OUR FUTURE: SUCCESSFUL SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION THROUGH SOCIAL HOUSING

This session explored the transformative role of social housing in promoting both social and professional integration. Francesca Lionetti (UN-Habitat) reminded us that housing is central to dignity, equality, and sustainable development, stressing that over 2.8 billion people currently live in inadequate conditions. She introduced recent UN-Habitat initiatives like the OEWG-H and the upcoming Knowledge Platform, aimed at shaping global housing policy through improved governance, data, and inclusion.

Christophe Vitu (Paris Habitat) presented how social housing helps families remain in cities like Paris, particularly after the birth of children, and supports young people through dedicated housing and career development tools. Paris Habitat also invests in shared spaces, youth participation, and local partnerships to strengthen community ties.

Natalie Marchand described the Walloon Region's innovative model where accredited non-profits deliver civic and professional integration programs in social housing neighborhoods. Pierre-François Guiffes outlined a housing initiative for civil servants that offers short-term rental solutions with high satisfaction rates and structured pathways to long-term housing. Jeremy Epstein (Aorif) urged a more holistic approach to housing, one that looks beyond units to social outcomes. Samara Jones (Housing First Europe Hub) closed with a powerful appeal to treat housing not as charity, but as a human right—calling for spaces where lived experiences shape policy, and where housing supports life, growth, and connection. The session emphasized that housing must be viewed not only as infrastructure, but as a catalyst for equity and resilience.

FRIDAY

The festival concluded with the ceremonial handover of a symbolic flag to Lisbon, the next host city, marking the official close of ISHF Dublin and signalling continuing international social and affordable housing engagement through to #ISHF2027

WHEN CITIES LEAD THE WAY FOR THE COUNTRY

LESSONS FROM INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL HOUSING FESTIVAL HOSTS

Local governments are taking innovative approaches to housing. From increasing the public, social, and cooperative housing stock, to ensuring a just and inclusive energy transition, or protecting tenants from the rise of short-term rentals. Cities are exploring new ways of empowering people for a whole of society response.

New models are emerging, and with them, new questions. How can urban-level policies disrupt financialisation trends? Can cities lead a cooperative revolution in housing? What can cities learn from each other? How can this local knowledge improve policy making national and European levels? How can cities contribute to and gain from the EU's forthcoming Affordable Housing Plan and the pan-European investment platform for affordable and sustainable housing?

Anne-Jo Visser (Amsterdam) emphasised the need for inclusive housing strategies across Europe that serve not only low-income residents but also middle-income earners, who increasingly cannot afford private housing markets. She urged EU policymakers to support the unique structure of housing associations, particularly not-for-profit cooperatives that face unfair taxation despite their public mission. She highlighted Amsterdam's strong example of social integration, where social housing is spread throughout the city rather than segregated.

“Please focus not only on affordable housing and not only on the lower income, but also on the middle income houses, and make mixed neighborhoods that are really nice neighborhoods to live in,”

Visser also pointed out how local housing markets require tailored solutions, citing Amsterdam's context of widespread social housing and the need for regulatory flexibility at the EU level.



Joan Ramon Riera (Barcelona) framed housing policy as a fundamental pillar of democracy and social cohesion. He evoked the legacy of post-war Europe and the foundational vision of the welfare state, calling on contemporary leaders not to claim poverty or budget constraints as excuses.

He argued that housing should be shielded from pure market forces and advocated for bold public investment in regulated, affordable housing systems. Barcelona, he said, is actively working to expand its public housing stock and cap tourist rentals.

He connected housing access with democratic stability, particularly among young people, stating that lack of housing limits their autonomy and fuels social discontent. Housing should respond to life changes, not merely financial means. Barcelona plans to reach 15,000 public units and produce 1,000 new homes annually by 2027.

“Let no one today in prosperous Europe tell us that there is no money to guarantee the right to housing.”

Jarmo Lindén (Helsinki) spoke about Helsinki’s leadership in organising the International Social Housing Festival, highlighting Finland’s commitment to social mixing and sustainable, accessible urban development. He described Helsinki’s strategy of dedicating 20% of new developments to social housing and integrating diverse housing types to avoid segregation. He stressed the importance of cohesive urban communities supported by strong public transport

“The best way to fight segregation is social mix—that is all types of housing in the same area,”

He also championed Finland’s internationally recognized “Housing First” model, which has drastically reduced homelessness by providing permanent housing before addressing other social needs. Lindén noted that Finland’s system ensures social housing rents are about 50% lower than the market rate, reinforcing affordability as a core tenet of their housing policy. He concluded by praising the role of international cooperation and events like the festival in spreading best practices and building solidarity across cities.



Mick Mulhern (Dublin) delivered a detailed and sobering overview of Dublin's housing challenges, emphasizing the gap between the scale of need and current capacity. With over 10,000 people homeless and a backlog of more than 30,000 on the housing waitlist, he laid out a massive infrastructure and development plan. He showed how the city is planning new developments on state and private lands, retrofitting aging social housing, and building cost-rental units where rent is based on construction and maintenance costs.

“We need more land, more money, and more people—land, money, and skills are the three things every city in Europe is short of,”

Mulhern highlighted innovative financing models, such as the city borrowing to build cost-rental housing and repaying loans through rental income. He also acknowledged the delicate balance between rapid construction and maintaining community ties, especially during renovations. His presentation emphasised long-term planning, policy innovation, and a relentless focus on delivery, while being honest about the limits of funding and capacity in Dublin's current system.

Filipa Roseta (Lisbon) shared the city's ambitious 10-year housing strategy, built on three pillars: increasing supply, improving access, and regenerating neighbourhoods. She noted Lisbon's paradox of having more homes than families, yet a growing affordability crisis, and stressed that the city must make use of its available public land and buildings.

“Housing is a right, not a privilege,”

The plan involves renovating 7,000 homes, building 2,000 new ones, and acquiring others, all with a €400 million municipal investment. A major focus is on cost-effective renovation for energy efficiency and livability.

Roseta also credited the Social Housing Festival with inspiring a groundbreaking return to cooperative housing, Lisbon's first cooperative tender in 25 years has now been launched. She highlighted rental support programs that prevent displacement and ensure affordability, as well as a massive urban drainage and sustainability project that enhances livability citywide. For Roseta, affordable housing is about preventing poverty and keeping families rooted in their communities. Her call to action framed housing as both a social and moral need:

“My only adversary is poverty, and that's what I want to fight.”



PRESENT AND FUTURE OF INDUSTRIALISED RENOVATION OF SOCIAL, COOPERATIVE AND PUBLIC HOUSING

From 2005 to 2022, emissions from the EU's building stock fell by 34 percent[1]. To meet the 2030 climate target, buildings emissions need to be reduced by 55 percent compared to 2022, meaning that annual reductions must almost triple. In order to align with this target, the social, cooperative, and public housing sector will have to find solutions providing rapid and affordable outcomes. Renovation with prefabricated panels designed in factories and assemble on site provide one of the potential solutions. Almost 15 years after the setting up of the Energiesprong programme in the Netherlands, what has the industrialised renovation of buildings already achieved and how will its future look?

SALUS SPACE: STORY OF A VISION

Villa Salus was a private clinic which, after years of abandonment and decay, was reconverted into a multi-functional space. The project, coordinated by the Comune di Bologna, and with the participation of Open Group, won the UIA call for proposals in 2016. Today, Salus Space strives to create a space of communal living and sustainable collaborative management. All of this is achieved by combining the social inclusion of migrants and refugees with a vision of intercultural welfare and active citizenship. Currently, the space is inhabited by around 40 residents from mixed backgrounds, e.g. single people, young families and families with children, and refugees and immigrants. They live in 20 apartments in a new timber structure which replaced the old clinic. Salus space is a place of social experiment, starting from the innovative governance model, based on shared administration, and the involvement of residents in the maintenance of common spaces and in the organisation of activities, including the shared vegetable garden and the community cafe run by a Syrian couple and serving Middle-Eastern dishes.

[1] <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/indicators/greenhouse-gas-emissions-from-energy>



UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF MOBILITY FOR SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

As we face the urgent need to rethink how and where we live, sustainable mobility and parking strategies are more important than ever. This session explored how innovative mobility solutions can be integrated into Irish social housing. Drawing from best practices from the EU-funded Shared-North Squared project in Bremen and Mechelen's Woonland housing provider, the event featured a roundtable with Dublin authorities to assess the potential of shared mobility. Christopher K. Manzira of Dublin City Council emphasized how combining active travel infrastructure with housing policy can address transport poverty and promote equitable urban access. Initiatives like the city's 314 km Active Travel Network, shared bike schemes, and inclusive urban design aim to improve mobility options for low-income residents and reduce reliance on private cars.

John Joe Hegarty from South Dublin County Council presented a transit-oriented development (TOD) strategy that embeds shared mobility into new housing projects through Mobility Management Plans. Projects such as Clonburris and City Edge are being designed with collective parking blocks that can be phased out over time, replaced by shared mobility hubs and improved public transport links like BusConnects and DART+. SDCC's goal is to reduce car dependency from the outset of planning while increasing green space and community amenities. Each shared car, Hegarty noted, can replace up to 20 private vehicles, supporting more livable, inclusive neighborhoods.

These efforts are closely aligned with the principles of the Shared North Squared (SN²) project, which advocates for scaling shared mobility in a socially inclusive way. SN² emphasizes rebalancing parking policies, starting with small shared fleets but planning for scale, ensuring early and continuous community engagement, and making shared transport highly visible and accessible. While cultural preferences and digital divides remain challenges, both councils are committed to piloting solutions, offering subsidies, and running awareness campaigns to ensure that shared mobility serves all residents—not just the tech-savvy or affluent.





ISHF

INTERNATIONAL
SOCIAL HOUSING
FESTIVAL

4-6 JUNE 2025 DUBLIN, IRELAND

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FINANCING AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN THE EU: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN THE NEW EUROPEAN CONTEXT

The event organised focused on how to best finance affordable housing delivery in different contexts in Europe, ranging from the well-established limited profit housing model in Austria to the new model for financing affordable housing from the State Development Fund in Czechia working together with local municipalities, to housing provision by public housing companies in Spain that combine homes for owner occupation and have in recent years moved in to rental sector. It also explored how, given the different starting point and local realities, can EIB bring an added value through its dedicated financial instruments and advisory/technical support.

UNLOCKING CONSTRUCTION INNOVATION: HOW CAN HOUSING PROVIDERS ACCESS NEW ADVANCED COMPONENTS AND SYSTEMS?

The housing and construction sectors face unprecedented challenges— not less regarding decarbonisation targets. Housing providers are constantly looking for innovations to improve the performance of buildings and facilities. However, for these new technologies and systems to be adopted and make real impact in housing projects, the construction industry must have these products market ready which requires demanding and expensive testing and development. This workshop explored how both industry and housing providers can simplify and fast-track their innovation efforts based on a collaborative / network approach.



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AND MUCH MORE..

Other Housing Europe network events included:

- Joint session featuring Giulia Larizza and Ilaria Orfino – Public engagement in social housing
- Acquisition Strategies in the fight against the social housing crisis in Brussels
- Vacant Buildings to Affordable Homes - A multi- Stakeholder approach to address the housing crisis
- Justice through a Commons- Based Approach to Land: Past, Present, and Future of Community Land Trusts
- Joint session featuring Raymond Fang and Meric Ozgunes – Emerging pathways for social housing in weak legislative and policy environment
- How to promote and develop the housing cooperative model with the younger generation
- Joint session featuring Jeff Hill and Liv Jørgensen – Sustainability and Affordability – International Focus (Netherlands, Germany,Denmark)
- Member Event Enrique Bueso – Models Of Housing Finance Creating Of Public Housing Stock With The Participation Of Public Providers
- Adaptation of housing to climate change
- Urban Economy - the story of appropriate Housing development in a city
- Development of Affordable Financing Schemes Targeted at Energy Efficiency Retrofits of Residential Buildings
- Telling the Lived Experience Expertise story in numbers - serious gaming workshop on the financing of social housing
- Joint sessions featuring Ella Hancock and Martin Chochola – Systemic change and developing housing expertise in Central and Eastern Europe
- Housing our future: successful social and professional integration through social housing
- Forging alternative housing futures in adverse environments
- The Housing Equation: The Search for Sustainable and
- Affordable Living within The Netherlands and the Nordic Countrie

THANK YOU

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You made this edition a
success.

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