

1 Partnership “Housing”

1.1 Key information on the Partnership “Housing”

During the Dutch Presidency of the EU in the first half of 2016 the Pact of Amsterdam was adopted by EU ministers of the Interior. It states that European cities will be more involved with the creation of EU legislation, EU funding and knowledge sharing. The relevance of this involvement is highlighted by the statistics that cities and urban areas now house more than 70% of all Europeans.

The Urban Agenda is composed of 12 priority themes essential to the development of urban areas. Each theme has a dedicated Partnership. These partnerships bring together cities, Member States and European institutions. Together, they aim to implement the Urban Agenda by finding workable ideas focused on the topics of EU legislation funding and knowledge sharing. One of the partnerships is the **Housing**.

Members of the Partnership

- Cities/City Networks: *Vienna coordinator*, Lisbon, Poznan, Riga, Scottish Cities Alliance, Eurocities
- Member States: *Slovakia coordinator*, Latvia, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Slovenia + 2 observers (Czech Republic and Sweden)
- Stakeholders: Association of Housing Corporations (AEDES), Housing Europe, International Union of Tenants
- EU- Institutions: DG REGIO, DG ENER, DG EMPL, European Investment Bank
- Experts: Faculty for Urban Studies Science Po, Paris on behalf of DG REGIO, URBACT

Focus areas and activities

The overall aim of the Housing Partnership is to create better legal and financial conditions for EU cities who need to invest in new, renewed, affordable housing for their populations on a broad scale. Through the orientation work of the Partnership in 2016, three priority areas were identified, which led to a division of work into three sub groups. The sub groups are covering the following themes:

- State Aid and social housing: state aid, competition law, definition of social housing under Service of General Economic Interest (SGEI) rules, VAT issues.



- Finance & Funding: investments and instruments, loans, “golden rule”, European semester, innovative funding, analysis of obstacles and good practice solutions in funding and financing of affordable housing.
- General Housing Policy: 1) land use, building ground, spatial planning, renovation, energy efficiency, anti-speculation, 2) security of tenure; co-design, rent stabilisation; support for vulnerable groups.

1.2 Working method

In 2016 a quantitative and qualitative survey on themes and priorities was conducted with partners in order to identify the most important issues of interest. Following this consultation process, the partnership then identified the three priority areas, as outlined above, which led to a division of work into three sub groups. Partners agreed to undertake detailed work to support the development of specific actions under these themes. For each of the themes, the Partnership is identifying bottlenecks to the achievement of effective solutions to the problems of affordable housing.

The partnership has delivered a number of early deliverables and is developing actions linked to ongoing activity. Meetings have been held with European Commission representatives to discuss the issue of state aid. Two studies are progressing focusing on financial obstacles to achieving adequate levels of affordable housing and innovative financial solutions, covering old and new member states. Work is ongoing to develop an online database that gathers and presents best practices attached to social and affordable housing across Europe with a particular focus on the role of governance systems. The database serves for the development of an Affordable Housing Policy Toolkit in order to provide guidance for practitioners and legislators. The policy guidance is under development.

1.3 State of play

Since March 2016, the Partnership on housing has worked towards defining actions which aim to contribute to and influence European legislation, funding and knowledge sharing. In July 2017 the Partnership on housing produced a consultation paper which was subject to public feedback in order to stimulate inputs from the wider public and stakeholders on the objectives and emerging actions of the housing partnership. A draft Action Plan will be developed in autumn 2017 taking into account the results of the public feedback and new research findings on funding and finance.

Draft actions developed for the online public feedback consultation are listed below:

Better Regulation

Action 1: Guidance on EU regulation and public support for housing

Action 2: Capacity building for application of state aid rules in affordable housing sector at a city level

Action 3: Revision of the ‘Services of General Economic Interest’ (SGEI) decision with regard to the narrow target group of social housing

Better Knowledge

Action 1: Affordable Housing Good Practice Database

Action 2: Provide policy guidance for supply of social and affordable housing in Europe

