

## 3 Progress of Partnership on Housing

### 3.1 Profile

#### 3.1.1 Members

- Member States: 5 – *Slovakia (coordinator)*, Latvia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Slovenia + two observers (Czech Republic and Sweden)
- Cities/City networks: 5 – *Vienna (coordinator)*, Scottish Cities Alliance, Riga, Poznan, Lisbon, EUROCITIES
- Stakeholders: 3 - AEDES, Eurocities, Housing Europe, International Union of Tenants
- EU-Institutions: European Commission - DG REGIO, DG EMPL, DG ENERGY, European Investment Bank
- Experts: Dr. Orna Rosenfeld, Urban Studies Science Po, Paris on behalf of DG REGIO, URBACT

#### 3.1.2 Activity

The Housing Partnership was set up as one of four pilot partnerships, and had its first constituent meeting in Geneva (CH) already in December 2015. During the first half year its work was dedicated to building up the partnership, finding appropriate methods to work and to creating a common knowledge base on to-date positioning and research on affordable housing on European level. The first two meetings of the partnership (Brussels, February 2016 and Bratislava, July 2016) focused on getting a broad overview on possible issues to tackle, which showed that the partnership can rely on a lot of documents and research, discussions and positions, and on the diversity and density of the knowledge of its partners. A mapping document was produced by the European Commission – DG REGIO to assist this process. To conclude the initial stocktaking a preliminary Action Plan including different work packages was elaborated and discussed by all the partners. After this initial brainstorming phase, the main focus of work was on identifying priority themes.

In order to identify the most important issues of interest, a quantitative and qualitative survey on themes and priorities was conducted alongside the development of the preliminary Action Plan. In July 2016, partners agreed to submit one-page document each in order to make the roles and expectations of all partners transparent, giving answers to following questions:

- What are the topics/issues that need to be tackled (according to you)?
- What are the topics/issues that you are both capable and willing to address by participating in a particular Working Group?
- Why have you joined the partnership and what do you personally see as its greatest challenge or obstacle?
- Which Working Groups do you propose (you are not expected necessarily to attend them all)?

The partnership then identified three priority areas, which led to a division of work into three sub groups at the autumn meeting in Geneva (September 2016). Partners agreed to undertake detailed work to support the development of specific actions under these themes. 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.

For each group, rapporteurs were nominated, who will be responsible to communicate with members and report back to the whole partnership.

- State Aid: AEDES, Eurocities, European Commission, EIB, International Union of Tenants, Lisbon, Vienna (rapporteur)
- Finance & Funding: AEDES, European Commission, EIB, Housing Europe, Netherlands, Lisbon, Poznan, Riga, SCA (rapporteur), URBACT
- General Housing Policy: European Commission, EIB, Housing Europe (Rapporteur on Part 1), International Union of Tenants (rapporteur for Part 2), Lisbon, Luxemburg, Riga, Slovakia (rapporteur for Part 2), URBACT, Vienna

In its last meeting in 2016 (December, Vienna), the partnership already went further into detail regarding the three sub-groups and members were presented a first draft of the findings on state aid issues related to affordable and social housing by the responsible sub group. DG REGIO and EIB presented an overview on the topic. Partners agreed on a work plan for 2017, a general working format of 2-days meetings (allows all partners to travel in time) with plenary and working group sessions and the use of a variety of working methods (presentations, discussions, brainstorming, etc.). It was also agreed that linking meetings up with other major events on housing and/or study visits to housing projects and urban development areas would be useful.

### *3.1.3 Meetings and Events*

The Partnership meets four times per year. Members also contribute to other meetings (such as seminars, conferences and working visits). The Partnership coordinators have attended and given presentations at numerous meetings including the European Week of Regions and Cities (in September 2016). Presentations will be given to meetings of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and the Social Affairs Forum of EUROCIITIES in spring 2017.

Dates and places of held meetings of the Partnership:

- December 2015 in Geneva, Switzerland
- February 2016 in Brussels, Belgium
- July 2016 in Bratislava, Slovakia
- September 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland
- December 2016 in Vienna, Austria

Scheduled meetings:

- March 2017 in Brussels, Belgium
- June 2017 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- September 2017 in Glasgow, UK
- November 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland

Subgroups:

- The subgroups conduct their work in different formats and formations and report back to the plenary either by mail or during the normal working meetings.

Other events on European level:

- Presentation of the partnership on the occasion of the UNECE - European Habitat Conference in Prague, 16-18 March 2016
- Presentation of the partnership during the European Week of Regions and Cities in Brussels, 12 October 2016

### *3.1.4 Expertise*

Experts were commissioned after a consultation of the partnership with the support of the Dutch presidency to undertake two studies entitled:

- Overcoming Obstacles to the Funding and Delivery of Affordable Housing Supply in European Cities
- Affordable Housing in Central and Eastern Europe: Identifying and Overcoming Constraints in New EU Member States

These studies will be debated at the September meeting in Glasgow.

An expert has also been engaged by DG REGIO to:

- Support the development of the action plan of the Partnership.
- To carry out analysis and draft briefing papers for the Partnership on priority themes identified by the partnership (e.g. briefing papers on State Aid and Social Housing, Affordable Housing, EU Semester, etc.).

The briefing papers are prepared in advance of each meeting in order to support discussion and definition of the relevant actions by the partners.

### *3.1.5 Draft Action Plan*

The partnership is currently in the process of formulating its priority actions to include in the Action Plan. The next meeting, which will take place in Brussels on 22-23 March 2017, will focus on emerging findings from the work of the partnership's three sub groups. The meeting will also consider the implications of this work regarding the development of specific actions. The Action Plan will be continuously elaborated following the milestones of the agreed work plan of the partnership as a work in progress.

### 3.2 Stakeholder communication

From the very beginning, a high interest on the work of the Housing Partnership could be observed from other cities, city networks, regions, EU-institutions (e.g. Intergroup on Urban Issues, Public Services and Long-term investments in the European Parliament, Committee of Regions), different single interest groups on local/regional, national, European and even international level, who are active or in the field of housing provision and financing as well as from other partnerships in the frame of the EUUA, like Urban Poverty and Migration/Integration. This led to the necessity to numerous contacts, meetings and presentations both for the coordinators and other members of the partnership. For the future, communication on the partnership will be supported after approval of the coordinators by the secretariat and via the website Futurium.

### 3.3 Lessons learned

#### **Positives**

The partnership could and can build on a balanced composition of members, including a variety of housing systems in different countries and cities throughout Europe, as well as strong representatives from the producers, consumers and financial side. It is accompanied by a renowned scientific expert with a high reputation on housing. This allows the partnership to get the maximum out of the expertise gathered and to rely on work that has been undertaken already in the past years in order to avoid duplications.

A relatively large amount of activity/ work/ deliverables have been produced since the partnership's inception in December 2015, the amount of energy, buy-in and institutional investment from partners is high.

The time necessary for confidence building amongst members in a new setting and the open method of brainstorming and prioritizing has allowed the Partnership to achieve a high degree of consensus in identifying key priority themes for the Action Plan to address.

#### **Advice**

The membership of the Partnership has changed significantly since its inception and is expected to continue to change in the next years, which led and leads to the necessity of repeating some discussions for new members.

The partnership as a pilot model of creating common sense needed time to develop its own methodology and way to deliver, without the organisational support by the secretariat which has been established only one year later.

Organisational assistance is vital in order to enable the coordinators to pursue with the agreed work plan, to support communication with stakeholders and via the website.

There is a need to agree not only on the form and content of deliverables, but also on the milestones in the process. Mutual understanding about the quality of actions, the overall timeframe

and transparency on all procedures undertaken by EU-institutions are necessary to be able the partnership to deliver.

### 3.4 Summary of Key Actions

The main actions of the Partnership to date can be summarised as follows:

- 5 partnership meetings have taken place as well as meetings of the three sub-groups.
- Coordinators were agreed upon.
- The working methods and a general work plan along priority issues have been agreed.
- Collection of expectations of members was undertaken.
- All partners have mandates to work for the partnership and legitimacy from their organisations.
- Initial stocktaking took place.
- A mapping document has been developed and discussed amongst members.
- Quantitative and qualitative survey on themes and priorities was done.
- Priorities have been agreed.
- 3 Subgroups have been formed, rapporteurs have been appointed.
- Presentations at meetings of EU-institutions, city associations, member organisations of stakeholders, other interest groups on local, regional, national and European level took place.
- Experts were commissioned to undertake two key studies on financing issues.
- DG REGIO commissioned an expert to support the partnership.
- A guidance paper on state aid has been issued and will be ready for inclusion in the Action Plan by March 2017.
- The tool-kit on affordable housing provision has started and will be presented in March 2017.
- Study visits have started at the Vienna meeting in December 2016 and are confirmed for the Brussels meeting in March 2017 again.

The Secretariat's tasks include:

- Getting an insight on the first phase of work of the partnership, getting to know members.
- Producing minutes of meetings; distribution after approval by coordinators/rapporteurs.
- Organisation of future partnership meetings (e.g. registrations, organisation of specific activities), including clarification on travel costs and other expenses.
- Review of state of play – i.e. Progress report (presented here).
- Collection of materials produced so far, in close liaison with coordinators and the expert commissioned by DG REGIO.
- Development of website content to improve visibility of the partnership.
- Support coordinators and members with general presentations and stakeholder communication, e.g. to be further used at EWRC 2018.

### 3.5 Progress on Objectives

#### 3.5.1 *Better Regulations*

Guidance is being developed on state aid and social housing to improve clarity for public and private investors. Preliminary results are currently being developed for the March 2017 meeting.

#### 3.5.2 *Better Funding*

Work is ongoing involving the identification and sharing of good practice on innovative financial models. Two research projects have been commissioned. EIB has presented a study on state aid related financing issues. Preliminary results are currently being developed for the March 2017 meeting.

#### 3.5.3 *Better Knowledge*

Work is ongoing to elaborate the Housing Policy Toolkit. Housing Europe presented their first ideas and exchanged with members. Preliminary results are currently being developed for the March 2017 meeting.