



Federal Ministry  
of Transport, Building  
and Urban Development

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# **Sustainable Housing and a possible Framework Convention of the UNECE**

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## Guiding Questions

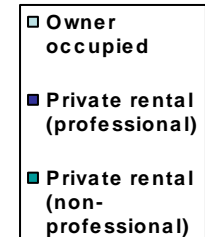
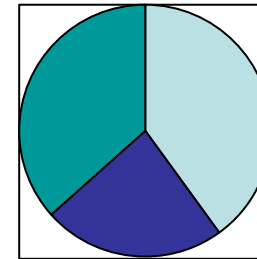
- **Main challenges** in Germany in improving sustainability of the housing sector
- **Role of a sustainable housing sector** in promoting environmental protection, addressing climate change issues, catalyzing economic development and promoting social cohesion
- How can **international cooperation** help national authorities to improve sustainability of their housing sector?
- **Added value and scope** of a possible framework convention for Germany
- **Added value and scope** of the possible framework convention for the UNECE region



# Housing in Germany: some basic information (1)

- **Distribution of Ownership:**

- Owner occupied 40%
- Private rental (professional) 23%
- Private rental (non-professional) 37%



- **Housing markets generally balanced, but regional differences:**

- Shrinking regions with vacancies
- Growing regions with rising rents
- Average rent increase 2005 – 2010: 1%

- **Focus of housing Policy on the building stock:**

- Reduction of newly built housing 2000 – 2009 by 62%
- Presently increasing building activities due to scarcities in several regions



## Housing in Germany: some basic information (2)

- **Social assistance for households with no/low income:**
  - Housing allowance (2,5% of the households)
  - Aid under social law, covering up to 100 % of housing costs (ca. 10% of the households)
- **Socially fair rent law:**
  - Usually indefinite period of contract,
  - rent and eviction control
- **Social housing (rental/owner occupied housing):**
  - Subsidies for private housing investment for specific target groups (stock/new housing)
  - Responsibility was transferred to the federal states.



## Main policy fields for more sustainable housing: Climate protection / Energy efficiency

- Buildings responsible for 40% of final energy consumption.
- **Energy concept** of the Federal government (2010):
  - 20% reduction of building stock heat demand until 2020
  - 80% reduction of primary energy demand until 2050
- **National energy regulations:**
  - New housing: Max energy use and pro rata use of renewable energies
  - Housing stock: (Cost effective) standards in case of substantial refurbishment measures
- **Promotion** of energy efficient new buildings and energy efficient renovation of buildings and use of renewable energies (reduces rent increases)



# Main policy fields for more sustainable housing: building investment

- **Sustainable housing:**
  - Comprehensive legislation (e. g. building codes, normes)
  - Assessment system for sustainable administrative buildings: good practice by federal government. Private sector: certification on a voluntary basis.
- **Healthy housing:**
  - Building regulations with respect to structural stability, fire safety, building materials, size of rooms, accessibility etc.
  - Regulations on fresh water with microbiological, chemical standards etc.



# International Cooperation as instrument to help national authorities

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- **Transboundary problems**
    - Climate change, environmental protection, air pollution, etc.
    - Cannot be solved only at national level.
    - International cooperation may be useful.
  - **Non-transboundary aspects in housing**
    - E. g. healthy housing, social cohesion in housing
    - As a matter of principle: non transboundary problems need national/regional solutions; however there are also examples of framework conventions for non transboundary problems.
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## Scope of a possible framework convention: ecological housing

- **Transboundary problems**
- **Conflict of goals:** high ecological standards may result in lower investment, higher housing costs, less employment in the building sector
- **Basic elements of conflict mitigation:**
  - Cost effective ecological standards (life cycle costs)
  - Promotion of ecological investment to reduce cost burden of owner occupiers, landlords and renters
  - Improvement of know-how in the building sector (new techniques, spread of knowledge)







# Scope of a possible framework convention: healthy / affordable housing

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## **Non transboundary problems**

- **Healthy housing:**

- From national point of view no need for supranational rules, but Germany is aware of the importance of health protection for other countries.
- Further discussions should be left to the working group.

- **Affordable housing:**

- Problems can be better solved at national/regional level as housing markets differ greatly between nations/ regions.
  - Efficient social housing systems of long standing should not be questioned.
  - Thus a convention should not contain supranational rules on affordable / social housing. Aspirational objectives may be part of a framework convention.
  - Germany does not support a right to housing.
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## Added value and scope of a possible framework convention

- **No final position of the German Government** on value added and scope of a possible framework convention yet
- **Scope:**
  - Focus on transboundary problems
  - Reconciliation of ecological, economic and social interests
  - The more restrictive and detailed a legally binding instrument, the more difficult to reach a consensus and to ratify the convention.
- **Value added:**
  - Depends on type of problem, content of framework convention.
  - Compare with other instruments like exchange of experience, best practice.
- **Discussion should be left to the working group.**



## Conclusion / Further proceeding

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- Value added and scope of a possible convention have to be further discussed as pointed out in the conclusion of the working group on affordable, healthy and ecological housing.
- Guidelines and best practices as well as exchange of experience could be an alternative.



Thank you for your attention.