



UNECE Regional Online¹ Workshop

Housing governance to support housing affordability

Focusing on housing affordability challenges in the South-Eastern Europe

23-24 February 2021

Languages: English and Slovenian with simultaneous interpretation

Introduction

Making housing sustainable is currently one of the most important policy challenges, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as countries and cities in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region face undersupply of affordable housing, homelessness, rising urban rents, low quality of housing and urban infrastructure, limited access to land for housing construction and renovation, and mounting urban poverty.

Lack of access to affordable and adequate housing is especially a challenge for vulnerable groups of the population also suffering from limited access to healthcare, fuel poverty and price inflation of essential goods and services. Lack of access to sustainable housing also remains a major challenge for middle-income earners, especially in many large cities where rents are skyrocketing, and the quality of available housing is often low. The middle-income population is therefore often trapped in a gap between not being eligible to access social and other state supported housing and the inability to afford rent or buy adequate housing through the private market. With the global economic slowdown, sudden stop in some sectors of the economy (tourism, hospitality, etc) in some cases and more people losing jobs, the risk of middle-income earners losing their homes in the future grew substantially.

The challenges of housing affordability and sustainability in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic are affecting cities, especially those which are densely populated. Closure of commercial services in urban areas in light of the crisis has led to a decrease in consumption in cities, thus putting pressure on businesses and their profitability which directly translates into inability of businesses to sustain the workforce.

Housing sustainability challenges and approaches to addressing them differ from country to country. Given the diverse national and local contexts of the housing sector, and the diverse legal frameworks and living traditions within the UNECE region, there is no one solution that fits all. Sharing and exchanging experiences and good practices allows the formulation of viable solutions and policies appropriate for specific national and local contexts.

The regional workshop is organized by the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning of Slovenia in cooperation with UNECE and with the support of Housing Europe, the Union for the Mediterranean and UN-Habitat.

¹ Organization of the workshop was mandated by the 81st session of the UNECE Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management (ECE/HBP/2020/3 Para 78 (b)). The link for the online participation will be sent to registered participants.



Workshop objectives

The Regional Workshop will:

- Support the regional exchange of experiences and good practices in countries of the UNECE region on promoting access to decent, adequate, affordable and healthy housing as part of the countries' responses to, and recovery plans for the COVID-19 pandemic (this will include the topics of "greening" cities and housing, using architectural and urban planning solutions and innovations to promote better quality of life, etc)
- Serve as a preparatory meeting to the Ministerial Meeting on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management 2021 "Affordable, adequate, and resilient housing in liveable cities, including cities which face extreme weather conditions". The Ministerial Meeting will take place on 6-8 October 2021 in Geneva
- Inform participants on the progress made with the preparation of a report of the study "#Housing2030: Improving Housing Affordability in the UNECE Region" which is being developed by UNECE in cooperation with Housing Europe, UN-Habitat and other partners; and will zoom into one of the four topics the study addresses – housing governance and regulation
- A session on housing policies in countries of the South-Eastern Europe will be also organized as part of the Regional Workshop.

Logistics

The workshop will be conducted in English and Slovenian with simultaneous interpretation. The link for the online participation will be sent to registered participants.

For more information:

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Draft Programme

23 February 2021

14:00 – 14:20 Opening and Objectives

- Mr. Andrej Vizjak, Minister of Environment and Spatial Planning of Slovenia (tbc)
- Ms. Olga Algayerova, UNECE Executive Secretary
- H. E. Ms. Ayşe Asya, Deputy Secretary-General for Transport and Urban Development, Union for the Mediterranean
- Mr. Bent Madsen, President of Housing Europe (tbc)
- Mr. Christophe Lalande, Leader, Housing Unit, UN-Habitat.

14:20-16:00 Session One. Overview of key international initiatives on affordable housing in Europe

- Representative of Germany on “The New Leipzig Charter” (tbc)
- Gerry Muscat, Head of Division, Regional and Urban Development at European Investment Bank (tbc)
- Ms. Marissa Plouin, Housing Policy Analyst, Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, OECD
- Ms. Nathalie Roebbel, Head of Unit, Air Quality and Health, the World Health Organization (tbc)
- Ms. Elena Szolgayova, #Housing2030 Initiative Co-Chair; Mr David Orr, #Housing2030 Initiative Co-Chair; Ms. Julie Lawson, Lead Writer of the study report - Overview of the #Housing2030 Initiative
Questions and comment.

16:00-16:30 Virual Coffee Break

16:30-18:00 Session Two. Panel discussion on “Governance for affordable, adequate and healthy housing for all”

Introduction: Mr. Brian Evans, Professor of Urbanism and Landscape, Head of Urbanism, Mackintosh School of Architecture, The Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow, the United Kingdom

Panellists:

- Ms. Aša Rogelj, Deputy Director General, Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning of the Republic of Slovenia
- Ms. Susanne Bauer, International Relations, the City of Vienna, Austria
- Housing Policy Expert, Russia (name tbc)
- Housing Expert from Central Asia (name tbc)
- Representative of Portugal (name tbc).



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24 February 2021

10:00-13:00 #Housing2030 Workshop on Housing Governance

10:00-10:05 Introduction

10:05-10:20 Keynote speaker (name tbc)

10:20-10:40 The #Housing2030 ‘Good Governance’ policy toolkit - Ms. Julie Lawson, #Housing2030 Lead Writer and Honorary Associate Professor at RMIT University.

10:40-11:30 Q&A Session (moderated by Mr. David Orr, #Housing2030 Co-Chair)

- Ms. Julie Lawson, #Housing2030 Lead Writer
- Ken Gibb, Director of the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence and Professor in Housing Economics (Urban Studies) within the School of Social and Political Sciences, Glasgow University, UK (tbc)
- Ms. Lucia Stasselova, Deputy Mayor Bratislava, Slovakia

11:30-11:40 Virtual coffee break

11:40-12:25 “What are the buildings blocks of a system of governance and regulation that serves to promote affordability in housing” (moderated by Ms. Elena Szolgayova, #Housing2030 Co-Chair)

Representatives of national and local governments, social and affordable housing providers and policy experts will share their experiences with housing policies.

12:25-12:30 Summary of the discussions

- Ms. Elena Szolgayova, #Housing2030 Co-Chair
- Mr. David Orr, #Housing2030 Co-Chair

12:30 – 14:00 Virtual lunch break

14:00-15:30 Subregional workshop on “Governance of the housing sector: Focus on South-East Europe”

The subregional workshop will include presentations with examples of ‘good practices’ to promote sustainable housing. The speakers are invited prior to the workshop to submit their examples to the “Housing2030” survey available under the [link](#).

- Ms. Doris Andoni, Director, Housing, Ministry of Finance and Economy of Albania
- Ms. Svetlana Ristić, Head of Section of Housing Policy, Energy Efficiency and Public Utilities, Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure, Serbia (tbc)
- Mr. Marko Čanović, Director General, Department of Housing Development, Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanization of Montenegro



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- Mr. Andrew Popelka, USAID, on a comparative study on the gaps in housing regulations in the Western Balkans
- Representative of Turkey (name tbc).

15:30-15:45 Closing by Ms. Aša Rogelj, Deputy Director General, Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning of the Republic of Slovenia