



# VITAL SPACES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE UNECE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND LAND MANAGEMENT AND THE WORKING PARTY ON LAND ADMINISTRATION

Dear reader,

This newsletter informs on the ongoing and planned meetings and activities of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management. For more information on the areas of work of the Committee, please visit the website: <http://www.unece.org/hlm/welcome.html> or write to [housing.landmanagement@unece.org](mailto:housing.landmanagement@unece.org).

## 75TH SESSION OF THE UNECE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND LAND MANAGEMENT, 8 and 9 OCTOBER 2014 and

### AN INFORMAL NEGOTIATING SESSION ON THE GENEVA CHARTER ON SUSTAINABLE HOUSING, 7 OCTOBER 2014

The 75th Committee session, which will take place at the Palais des Nations in Geneva on 8 and 9 October 2014, will bring together high-level representatives of governments and stakeholders from the UNECE region and observers to discuss the implementation of the Committee's *Strategy for Sustainable Housing and Land Management in the ECE region 2014-2020*, the Committee's work programme for 2014-2015 and national policies on housing, urban development and land management. This session is also important as it takes place just a few months after the release of a proposal for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the Open Working Group established by the United Nations General Assembly. The proposed SDGs include a separate goal on cities and human settlements.

The Committee session will also take place less than a month after the First Preparatory Meeting for the Habitat III Conference, the third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development. The Habitat III Conference will take place in 2016. The Committee at its session will provide input into the content of this global event.

The 75<sup>th</sup> session meeting will be preceded by the **Committee's informal negotiating session on a draft Geneva Charter on Sustainable Housing**. The negotiating session will take place on **7 October 2014**.

The Committee elaborated the first draft of the Geneva Charter on Sustainable Housing at its informal meeting on 7 May 2014. At that informal Committee meeting, representatives of 27 countries, including ministers, heads of agencies, representatives from UN agencies, municipalities, academia, private sector and NGOs have agreed on the scope and objectives of the Charter.

The draft was further developed through an e-mail consultation with member States and it was discussed at the meeting of the Bureau of the Committee on 18 July. The draft Charter will be discussed at the

informal negotiating session on 7 October 2014 and will then be presented at the 75<sup>th</sup> Committee session.



The proposed Charter will develop a framework for concerted actions by member States to improve housing and living conditions in the region. It will support the building of green and socially

inclusive human settlements and the long-term sustainability of the housing sector, as well as strengthening the implementation of existing UNECE housing guidelines, policy recommendations, action plans and other documents.

For more information on the Committee session and its informal negotiating session, and registration procedures, please visit: <http://www.unece.org/hlm/welcome.html>

## WORKSHOP “THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL HOUSING: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD”



Social housing in Europe is back on the political agenda of UNECE member States. The social housing sector in the majority of European Union member states has been shrinking since the 1980s.

On 4 and 5 February 2014, the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management, in cooperation with UN-HABITAT and the European Federation of Public, Cooperative &

Social Housing (CECODHAS), held a workshop on “The future of social housing: environmental and social challenges and the way forward”. Discussion during this workshop focused on the impact of the global financial crisis on housing affordability, governments’ responses and the challenges that countries are facing at the moment to increase social housing. Among the questions discussed were: different concepts of social housing, provision and financing of social housing; improvement of social cohesion and living conditions; easing energy poverty; and the promotion of environmental sustainability.

The workshop concluded that a stronger government response and the mobilisation of all market participants to address the housing consequences of the global financial crisis are needed. The recommendation of the UNECE International Symposium on Social Housing (Vienna, 2004) is back on the political agenda: this recommendation being for governments to “develop clear strategies for social and affordable housing which signals to all housing market participants the state’s role in supporting it, and what is required from each participant to make this strategy work”. The workshop also agreed that countries need advice on how to develop and implement such strategies. As an outcome of this workshop, a policy document will be developed, which will provide recommendations to assist member States in addressing their social housing policy challenges.

The workshop information is available at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=33997>

After the workshop, an in-depth study was conducted and the policy brief “Models of social housing, challenges and trends in social housing policies in the UNECE region” was issued. Outcomes of the study will be presented by its principal author, Ms. Orna

Rosenfeldt, UNECE Senior Housing Expert, at the Committee’s 75<sup>th</sup> session. The presentation will include a discussion of the draft policy brief. The main objectives of the discussion will be to explore the challenges in achieving access to adequate and affordable housing in the UNECE region and to propose possible future activities to be implemented by the Committee in cooperation with its partners. Following the discussions at the Committee session, an updated policy brief will be published.

## WORKSHOP “LAND INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR SMART CITIES”

The major challenge for the governments today is how to provide people with a decent quality of life, while at the same time managing the pressures coming from overpopulation, rapid demographic growth, urbanization and climate change. Nowadays, half of the world’s inhabitants live in cities and urban areas which are depleting our planet’s resources and people’s living conditions are worsening. Hence, “smart cities” are necessary to allow citizens to live in a more sustainable and efficient environment. In order to achieve this, cooperation is needed among all the stakeholders who should work together to the right solutions and implement them.



In the UNECE region, much attention has been recently dedicated to the topic of “smart cities”, which is already addressed within multiple European projects and forums. Further to these, the UNECE’s Committee on Housing and Land Management has organized, in cooperation with Geospatial Media and Communication, the workshop “Land Information Systems for Smart Cities”.

The workshop showcased examples of land administration systems which form a strong foundation for smart cities; presented success stories from authorities who successfully implemented smart city approaches; shared information on the wide range of software, services and technologies available for developing sound information systems for smart cities; and brainstormed on possible future steps to promote effective and modern land administration and the implementation of smart city approaches.

Speakers at the workshop included: representatives from 20 countries, including many UNECE member States and also India, Mexico, Singapore, Thailand and the United Arab Emirates who come from governments, academia and companies. The topics addressed included information systems to support urban planning and management, land administration, housing, energy, environment and disaster risk reduction. The workshop highlighted several approaches to the use of Land Information Systems for improving city services and increasing the participation of citizens in cities’ decision-making processes.

This event was part of the Sixth Geospatial World Forum, a bi-annual international conference and exhibition, which supports dialogue on geospatial technologies and their role in promoting economic and social development. The Geospatial World Forum brought together more than 1000 delegates from over 80 countries who deliberated on geospatial technologies and their role in promoting sustainable development. The event took place at the Centre International de Conférences Genève from 5th to 10 May 2014 and the UNECE workshop on 8 and 9 May.

Further information on this workshop is available at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=34473>

## **UNECE WORKING PARTY ON LAND ADMINISTRATION EVENTS AT THE “WORLD BANK CONFERENCE ON LAND AND POVERTY 2014”**



Activities of the UNECE Working Party on Land Administration (WPLA) were presented on 24 March at the World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty, which has as its 2014 theme, “Integrating Land Governance into the Post-2015 Agenda: Harnessing Synergies for Implementation and Monitoring Impact”. The conference session “Vision for land governance and cooperation in Europe” included presentations by representatives of national land administration authorities and academia from six UNECE countries (Azerbaijan, Greece, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom); preliminary outcomes of a number of WPLA studies on land administration institutions were presented and debated at this session.

Another session “Regional initiatives to improve land governance” included presentations by representatives from the UN regional commissions, UN-Habitat, the Organization of American States, the World Bank and the Government of Dubai and discussed perspectives on land administration and management from different regions around the world. During this session, many participants and speakers highlighted the unique model that the UNECE WPLA provides for intergovernmental cooperation on a regional level. Although multiple regional initiatives on land administration exist in other regions, no other intergovernmental bodies have been established so far.

The session concluded that there is a wealth of experience to be shared between different regions and that such an exchange should be organized on a regular basis. The next global

information exchange session will take place in one year, during the next World Bank Conference.

The World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty is organized annually and aims at fostering dialogue and the sharing of best practices on the diversity of reforms, approaches and experiences that are being implemented in the land sector around the world.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=35241>

## **UNECE AND INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES TO REINFORCE COOPERATION ON LAND MANAGEMENT TO BETTER PROTECT PROPERTY RIGHTS AND IMPROVE PEOPLE’S LIVES**

Sound land administration and land management support many goals of the United Nations, including secure tenure for peoples’ homes, environmental protection, disaster risk mitigation, conflict prevention and economic development. In the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), many agencies work to improve land administration and land management through strengthened property registers, improved geospatial data collection, easier cross-border property transfers, more transparent and accessible land data, and much more.



On 21 May 2014, WPLA hosted a meeting of key international agencies in order to discuss how to better work together in order to use land management to improve the quality of life of people in the region. High-level representatives from the Council of European Geodetic Surveyors, EuroGeographics, the European Land Information Service, the European Land Registry Association, the International Federation of Surveyors, the Permanent Committee on Cadastre in the European Union and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme participated in this meeting.

Participants came away with an agreement to work to coordinate activities, such as collecting data from member States, and to try to develop a common statement of goals for the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development to take place on 2016. They also agreed to work together to examine other key issues in the UNECE region, such as informal, unplanned housing and the development of address registers.

The conference preceded a half-day workshop hosted by the European Land Information Service and a two-day workshop hosted by the Danish Geodata Agency and WPLA on, “The Socioeconomic Potential of Land Administration Services”. This last workshop examined how land registration data can support effective land administration through an exchange of experiences

on developing open and interoperable property data systems and related applications. The development of such systems is essential to protecting consumers, developing efficient land registration services and encouraging property markets which can attract capital and drive economic growth. In addition, related applications can be used to support more efficient government and private sector services.

For more information on the UNECE and its work to develop land management in its region, please visit:  
[www.unece.org/hlm/welcome.html](http://www.unece.org/hlm/welcome.html)

## **GOVERNMENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST LEARNING FROM UNECE EXPERIENCES OF LAND AND PROPERTY ADMINISTRATION**

A fully functioning and well regulated real estate market is essential to ensure sustainable housing and promote economic growth. It can accelerate economic recovery in the short term, as well as sustainable development and greener economies in the long term. Promoting the sector is a driving force in the provision of economic, environmental and social benefits.

At the conference, “Towards a Sustainable Real Estate Market – Real Estate Registration, Investment, Regulation and Capacity Building” organized by Dubai Real Estate Institute, an educational branch of Dubai Land Department, governments and real estate professionals from throughout the Middle East discussed how to develop sustainable real estate policies in Dubai and beyond.



The UNECE delegation also included the UNECE Executive Secretary Sven Alkalaj, Chair of the UNECE Working Party on Land Administration Elshad Khanalibayli, and Vice-Chair of the UNECE Real Estate Market Advisory Group Enrico Campagnoli.

UNECE intergovernmental and advisory bodies on these topics, including the Committee on Housing and Land Management, Working Party on Land Administration, and Real Estate Market Advisory Group, do not yet have analogs in other United Nations regional commissions, including in that working in the Middle East. Mahmoud El Burai, Managing Director of Dubai Real Estate Institute, stressed that Dubai authorities intend to establish a strategic cooperation with UNECE in order to learn from its experience to build and strengthen their own intergovernmental institutions for sustainable land and property management.

For more information, please visit:  
[www.unece.org/hlm/welcome.html](http://www.unece.org/hlm/welcome.html)

## **UNECE FINALIZED A RESEARCH MISSION IN UZBEKISTAN TO PREPARE COUNTRY PROFILE ON HOUSING AND LAND MANAGEMENT**



Due to rapid population growth, Uzbekistan faces challenges in the provision of housing and infrastructure. With about half of Uzbekistan’s population living in rural areas, the development and the improvement of rural living standards is particularly important. In order to address the situation, in 2009 the Government launched a targeted State programme of individual housing construction in rural areas. From 2009 to 2013 more than 900 new rural residential areas were built in 159 rural areas of the country. More than 33.5 thousand individual houses with a total area of 4.5 million square metres were built as well as 730 km of paved roads, and more than 800 objects of social, industrial and market infrastructure were constructed in rural areas.

The Government of Uzbekistan considers housing construction in the country a priority that will require both short and long-term attention and aims to further develop its long-term strategy for enhancing housing development, especially in rural areas. To this end, the Government requested the preparation of a country profile on housing and land management from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

The preparation of country profiles is a flagship activity of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management. These studies provide tools for governments to use in analysing their policies and strategies on housing, urban development and land management, as well as the institutional and financial frameworks for these sectors.

On the invitation of the Government of Uzbekistan, the UNECE secretariat conducted a preliminary mission to Uzbekistan on 24-26 February 2014. Based on results of the discussions during this preliminary mission, the structure of the country profile that will be prepared for Uzbekistan has been finalized.

As part of the preparatory work for the Country Profile study, the Government of Uzbekistan, represented by the Ministry of Economy, has set up a high level Interagency Working Group to coordinate and supervise the preparation of the study; as well as a team of national experts who will assist the international team of experts in elaborating the study through provision of information.

To establish the basis for cooperation on the country profile, the Ministry of Economy, UNECE and UNDP signed a Memorandum of Understanding which provides the framework for cooperation needed in order to facilitate collaboration during the preparation of the profile.

Further, on 12-13 June, the Ministry of Economy of Uzbekistan, UNECE, the World Bank and UNDP Uzbekistan organized a high-level workshop "Approaches and best practices for housing, urban development and land use" in Tashkent where international and national experts and high-level representatives of the Government have discussed approaches to and practices in housing construction, urban planning and land administration in Uzbekistan and in the UNECE region.

Directly after the workshop, a week-long research mission of UNECE international experts was held. These experts worked together with Uzbek national experts on the preparation of the country profile study. The outcome of this cooperative work will be presented at the 75th session of the Committee on Housing and Land management in October 2014.

For more information on Country Profiles, please visit: <http://www.unece.org/housing-and-land-management/areas-of-work/country-profiles-on-housing-and-land-management.html>

## EXPERT OPINIONS

### WHY INVEST IN HOUSING? by Doris Andoni



**Doris Andoni** holds a B.A. in Urban Planning and Architecture and Master of Science degree in Urban Housing Management. She is the Director of the Housing Policy Department in the Ministry of Public Works and Transport of Albania and a member of the Bureau of UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Administration.

There is a general tendency to consider housing as part of "preferences and desires" or just as a commodity that is provided by the market. Yes! The statement is true: Housing is a commodity, however for most of the World population, it is the most expensive commodity that they can ensure in their life and for many of them it is not reachable at all; there will be always a group of population that will not be able to buy or rent it in the free market.

Being consumed individually, it is sometime difficult for politicians to see the public interest in housing and therefore to get involved with policies. Billions of dollars are invested in building infrastructure, water and sanitation, schools and hospitals, improving education and health care systems, but very little in housing policies. A survey of ECE member States, conducted during November-December last year, reveals that low political attention to housing policies is one of the major housing challenges for the region.

Children need to get better education, but their performance will depend at large on their living conditions at home. A study undertaken by the Scottish government (2010), revealed, among others that both overcrowding and homelessness impact in a particularly negative way on children's educational performance, as well as on their physical and psychological health and life chances.

Population need better health care, but costs for public health will lower if housing conditions will improve. It is internationally recognised the inter-relation between housing conditions and health. The World Health Organization emphasizes that home remains a major cause for ill health through exposure to many factors, while a report of European Observatory, draw attention on unhealthy and substandard housing and homelessness as factors that threat physical, social and mental health.

In line with policies that enable markets to work, public investments in housing, should be reconsidered in many forms: providing shelter for homeless, displaced people and population affected by natural disasters; providing affordable housing for low-income earners; bringing public services to informal dwellers; supporting more energy efficient houses; eliminating barriers for disabled and elderly; etc.. Devote more attention to housing means investing in human capital, taking care of the less advantaged and safeguard the environment. Invest in housing means contributing to a country's economy.

Housing is not just a commodity. It is a basic need and a human right, and, ensuring that everyone in the society has access to adequate and affordable housing, should be at the heart of every policy.

### ENERGY SAVINGS AS OBLIGATIONS, A MECHANISM WORTH ASSESSING FOR TRANSITION COUNTRIES, by Emilio Soberón



**Emilio Soberón Bravo** holds an Environmental Engineer Bachelor from the Paris University, specialized on energy and environmental subjects and four years of Geophysical Engineering at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. He is an intern at UNECE Housing and Land Management Unit.

Incentivizing energy-efficiency is a complex process that requires adequate legislation and social willingness to embrace innovative technical measures. The French Government issues energy-saving certificates in order to encourage energy savings. With this instrument, energy-saving measures are imposed on energy producers, such as electricity, heat or gas suppliers, and on energy-consumption inducers, such as companies sending employees on business travel.

The residential sector represented 44.49% of the final energy consumed in France in 2012. Consequently, measures targeting this sector, such as optimization of individual and collective heating systems and improved insulation have been important to reduce energy consumption. This mechanism also encourages energy savings in other sectors. Measures in other industries include installing heat pumps in livestock industries, more efficient engines for agriculture and industry and even training programs for energy-aware driving.

Eligible participants can sell their energy-saving certificates to producers; producers can then use these certificates to offset their own energy-reduction obligations.

From 1 July 2006 to 31 December 2010, this programme resulted in measures including, among others, the installation of 850,000 energy-efficient boilers and improved insulation in 570,000 homes. These improvements yielded a final energy savings of 12.3 terawatt-hours, which is 1.5 per cent of the annual consumption from the residential and service sector. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were reduced by 3.1 megatons, which is 3.14 per cent of the residential and service sector CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

This shows that government-enforced energy austerity can encourage energy savings. Energy security could be supported with the reduction of energy consumption. Developing countries could

benefit from these policies to achieve economic stability through sustainable urban development.

More information can be found at  
<http://www.developpement-durable.gouv.fr>.

## HOW INVESTMENT IN SOCIAL HOUSING CAN BOOST ECONOMIC GROWTH? by Matthew Gardiner

Policy makers have more restricted options in devising routes out of current housing market turmoil than at other times of market distress. With monetary policy already relaxed and the high levels of government debt requiring cuts in public spending, the prospect of government stimulus to housing market recovery is a long way off. Number of people that are unable or unwilling to meet the full economic cost of their home is increasing. Consequently, the need for affordable housing that can meet their needs is rising.

Against this context, experts believe that increasing the supply of sub-market social housing, will not only provide secure, well managed homes for those who are, or are threatened with being, homeless or unable to compete at full cost levels, but will also bring economic benefits:

- Firstly, because it stimulates countries' flagging economies – in the UK it is estimated that every 100,000 homes built will increase GDP by 1%.
- Secondly, it provides jobs – again, UK data shows that every new home built produces 2 new jobs for a year.

Social housing is always a key part of an effective and sustainable housing market. At times of market turmoil it can also provide a critical role to stabilise and stimulate economic recovery.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### AT THE SECRETARIAT:

#### Our new staff



**Amie Figueiredo** has recently joined the Housing and Land Management Unit in the Economic Cooperation, Trade, and Land Management Division of UNECE. She has worked at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago, Chile working in the Sustainable Development and Human Settlements Division as well as in the Office of the Executive

Secretary on issues related to sustainable development, Rio+20 and its outcomes and the Post-2015 development agenda. She has also worked in the NGO sector where she secured funding for a variety of conservation projects globally. In addition she has worked in the private sector and possesses chemical regulatory management experience in environmental health and safety, hazard communication, and environmentally sound management. She has a MSc in Environmental Policy Studies with a BS in Biology and Chemistry and completed the Certificate Program in Conservation & Environmental Sustainability from Columbia University.

She has experience in coordinating multiple inter-governmental, multi-sectoral meetings; servicing of inter-agency and expert group meetings/seminars; providing technical assistance and capacity-

building workshops; assisting in the implementation of multi-disciplinary projects and inter-divisional initiatives on development issues and policies for intergovernmental bodies regarding the post-2015 development agenda.

#### Our consultants



**Cristian Olarean** joined the UNECE Economic Cooperation, Trade, and Land Management Division as an intern in August 2012. Since July 2013, he has been working as a legal consultant to its Housing and Land Management Unit. As a legal consultant, he provides advice on legal matters not only to the secretariat of the Housing and Land Management Unit, but also to its Bureau and its Committee. His other responsibilities include drafting a

non-legally-binding charter on sustainable housing for the ECE region, supporting the preparation of country profiles on housing and land management, where as an international expert has drafted the chapter on legal and institutional framework for housing, land management and urban development of the Republic of Moldova. Mr. Olarean obtained his MAS in International and European Policy from the Global Studies Institute of the University of Geneva (UNIGE). He also holds an MBA from the University of Gh. Asachi and an LL.M. in European Law from the University of Petre Andrei Romania. His main fields of interest are economics, international law and leadership in foreign policy.



**Larisa Burakova** currently works at the Housing and Land Management Unit of UNECE as a Consultant. She has a University degree in Management from the National Research University Higher School of Economics in Moscow, Russia. She also obtained a Master in Public Administration from Peking University in Beijing, China and an MSc in Public Administration and Government from the London School of Economics and Political

Science in London, UK. She has authored books and several other publications published in various newspapers and magazines. She is experienced in drafting policy documents on legal and institutional issues on housing and land management.

#### Our Interns



**Domenica Carriero** graduated with honors in Foreign Languages at the University of Turin (Italy) and joined the University of Leiden (The Netherlands) as a PhD candidate in English Philology. She is currently enrolled in an MBA in Sustainable Business at the University of St. Gallen and at the Business School Lausanne (Switzerland). She has several years of experience in teaching, marketing and communication, customer services and has had consultancies for the private sector.

Domenica is specialized in marketing and communication, sustainability strategy and sustainable performance assessment. Her professional interests include corporate social responsibility, energy efficiency, disaster risk reduction, water management, land

management and noise mitigation. At the Housing and Land Management Unit, she organized the workshop “Land Information Systems for Smart Cities” within the Geospatial World Forum. She currently coordinates the project on smart cities for transition and developing countries and works on sustainable urban development initiatives and standards for smart cities. She also assists in other emerging tasks.



**Michele Melchiorri** holds a B.Sc in Urban Planning from Politecnico di Milano (Italy) with the thesis “Green buildings in the real estate market”. He is currently enrolled in an M.Sc in Urban Planning and Policy Design at the same university. Michele joined the UNECE Housing and Land Management Unit as an intern in March, where he is involved in activities under the Sustainable Urban

Development work programme.

Michele is currently working on a policy brief on urban planning, and follows the work of the Committee on Housing and Land Management on disaster risk reduction and building standards. He has cooperated with UNECE in 2012-2013 on the preparation of the UNECE REM study: *Greening the Real Estate Markets*, which was presented at the 74<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee last October. His interests and researches range from energy and resources efficiency in architecture and planning to disaster risk reduction and urban resilience.



**Javier Molero Segovia** is working as an intern at UNECE since March 2014. He is assisting the Housing and Land Management Unit with the preparation of a publication on Land Governance. Javier is also actively involved in the communications activities of the Unit.

Javier holds a double bachelor in Law and Political Science from Universidad de Granada (Spain). He has a special interest in

human rights, immigration and displacement issues as well as issues that focus on cooperation and development between countries and international organizations. Prior to working at UNECE, he worked at the Department of Social Services of the Granada Council City Hall. His work was in the areas of immigration, evictions and gender problems.



**Emilio Soberón Bravo**, Environmental Engineer from the Paris University, specialized on energy and environmental subjects after completing four years of Geophysical Engineering, focused on environmental geophysics, at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. He has been actively following emerging legislation and techniques on sustainable energy transition in order to transfer legislative models from developed

countries to emerging renewable energy markets.

Besides being involved with international organizations that seek knowledge dissemination, environmental protection and sustainable development, such as Student Energy, Latinoamérica Renovable and UNECE, he has completed several technical certifications on

environmental issues such as hazardous waste management or energy development research.

## A NEW PUBLICATION OF BSHF:

### PERCEPTIONS OF OVERCROWDING: PUBLIC VIEWS OF SPACE IN THE HOME



“The research in our report ‘Perceptions of Overcrowding: Public views of space in the home’ highlights the difference between public opinion and the current overcrowding standards. It suggests that the standards fall well below public expectations, particularly for some household types. As a result, official estimates are likely to be underestimating the scale of the problem with overcrowding.

“Our focus groups highlighted the additional space that children need for healthy development and family life. In contrast, the statutory overcrowding measure suggests children need half the space of adults, while other standards give no indication of the space needed by household members. In England, 1 in 7 families with children live below the minimum standards for space agreed by our focus groups. This is much higher than current official estimates of overcrowding. Our research also suggests that the public think that couples over 60 should have access to two bedrooms to allow for the increased likelihood of ill-health or disability. Again, current standards do not consider the additional needs of older people. “We recommend that The Department for Communities and Local Government and the Scottish and Welsh Governments should introduce a new statutory overcrowding measure that draws on public perceptions of minimum space standards. This would be a big first step in addressing this issue.”

This exploratory research used focus groups to investigate public perceptions of minimum space standards in the home. It highlights the difference between public perceptions of minimum standards and measures of overcrowding.

In Britain, overcrowding is currently defined in a variety of ways leading to a lack of clarity on the scale of the problem. Many definitions appear arbitrary and do not reflect changes in the way people use their homes or take into account public perceptions of minimum standards.

*‘Perceptions of overcrowding: public views of space in the home’* available for free download from <http://www.bshf.org/published-information/publication.cfm?lang=00&thePubid=9b49ad6f-d4ae-52c7-7049c23c4eef86d9>

If you are interested in finding out more about our work on new settlements or discussing this work with us, please email [windsor@bshf.org](mailto:windsor@bshf.org).

### UPCOMING EVENTS OF THE UNECE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND LAND MANAGEMENT IN 2014

- Informal Negotiating Session on the Charter on Sustainable Housing, Geneva, 7 October 2014
- 75<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee on Housing and Land Management, Geneva, 8- 9 October 2014

- Workshop “Real Estate Infrastructure: Fit for Use?”, Vienna, 16-17 October 2014
- Workshop “Energy Efficiency for Sustainable Housing”, Tunisia, 5 November 2014
- Workshop “Strengthening National Capacities for Sustainable Housing”, Belgrade, 11-12 November 2014
- Urban Future Conference, Graz, 18 - 19 November 2014
- Workshop "Benchmarking of land administration systems and implementation of Land Governance Assessment Frameworks (LGAF) in the UNECE region", Baku, 27 – 28 November 2014

For more details, please visit our website - <http://www.unece.org/hlm/welcome.html>

## A NOTE ON THE COORDINATORS:

Inputs to this edition of the newsletter were coordinated and edited by **Ms. Cecilia Batac** and **Mr. Javier Molero Segovia**. You may contact them at the email addresses below.



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Article contributions to this newsletter are welcome. Please send them by 30 September 2014 to be included in its next issue. For more information on the standard requirements for the articles, you may write the Vital Spaces coordinator

Ms. Cecilia Batac, email: [cecilia.batac@unece.org](mailto:cecilia.batac@unece.org).

## THE TEAM: A break from work



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