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Key outcomes and policy recommendations of the study on housing for migrants**Results of the ECE Housing for Migrants Study****‘Housing for Migrants: Challenges and Practices in the ECE Region’****Note by the Secretariat**

1. The inflow of population to urban centres has been dramatically increasing due to continued national and international migration. From 2010 to 2015, the number of refugees received in the UNECE region has doubled from 2 to 4.8 million in the same period. The ECE Region has experienced a dramatic increase in the inflow of migrants. Housing for migrants in the context of an already existing lack of affordable decent housing in the ECE region, especially in cities, became a serious challenge.
2. The Committee at its seventy-sixth session adopted a decision to prepare, in cooperation with partner organizations, a survey on how countries in the ECE region are addressing the current migration crisis (ECE/HBP/184). The Committee requested its Bureau to elaborate a concept of the study, and invited the secretariat to implement it, subject to the availability of resources.
3. The concept note of the study was presented and discussed at the Committee’s seventy-seventh session (Information Note 3, ECE/HBP/188). The Committee invited the secretariat to prepare a study on housing for migrants in the ECE region and present the results at the seventy-eighth Committee session.
4. The research and preparation of the ECE Housing for Migrants Study has been carried out during 2016-2017 with the support of the City of Vienna and the Federal Office for Housing of Switzerland. It examines the current challenges and practices in housing new migrants in the ECE region. The study aims to provide recommendations for provision of housing to “new migrants” based on an analysis of identified innovative practices, an extensive literature review and interviews with representatives of local and central governments, international banks, housing providers and third-sector organizations. The report is expected to be published and launched in spring 2018 at a workshop on affordable housing to take place in Vienna. This document provides preliminary results and selected recommendations of this study.
5. Delegates are invited to take note of the document.



Housing for Migrants: Challenges and Practices in the ECE Region

Geneva 2017



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The research and preparation of the ECE Housing for Migrants Study has been carried out with the support of the City of Vienna and the Federal Office for Housing of Switzerland.

Introduction

According to the UNHCR, there are currently 65.6 million forcibly displaced people worldwide. Approximately 20 million of these are refugees (UNHCR, 2017). While most refugees and displaced people are hosted by their neighbouring countries, the migration of people from outside the ECE into the region has increased significantly since 2011. In response to the exceptionally large movements of refugees, the UN General Assembly called for the first-ever summit at head-of-state and government level on 19 September 2016. By adopting the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, the 193 UN Member States recognized the need for a comprehensive approach to human mobility and enhanced cooperation at the global level. The declaration further extends the objectives of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, including its Sustainable Development Goals. As a response to the immediate situation, recent international initiatives and efforts have focused on the emergency needs of new migrants. Integration related to the crucial connections between domestic labour markets, employment, language and citizenship have also been prevailing concerns (see UN, 2016; TMC, 2017). While access to adequate housing has been recognised as a key indicator of integration (OECD, 2012), the process and prospects of accessing medium- and long-term housing across tenures received comparatively limited attention. The study on housing for migrants in the ECE Region was prepared at the request of the ECE Committee on Housing and Land Management. A proposal for the study was discussed at the Committee's seventy-seventh session in 2016 (ECE/HBP/188).

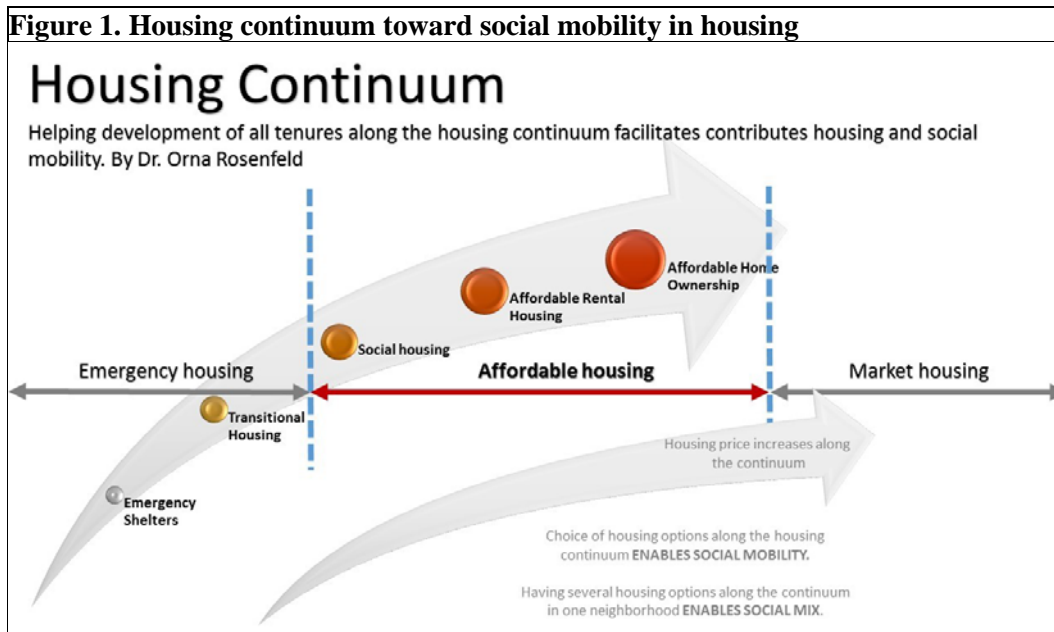
The study scope and objectives

The study is addressing integration of new migrants through the provision of medium- and long-term housing. It focuses on 'new migrants'¹ with legal status, more specifically, the new migrants moving to the ECE region from non-ECE countries.² The study examines the challenges that these migrants face when accessing housing in the early years following their arrival in a host country.

The study recognises and highlights that the housing systems in the ECE region are rich and diverse. Part of that diversity is expressed in different tenure balances in ECE member States. For this reason, the research goes beyond the common focus on emergency shelters and social housing to cover a range of housing tenures and emerging solutions and analyzes a wide variety of affordable housing options for new migrants along *the housing continuum* (see **Figure 1**).

¹ To the extent that the available data allows, the focus is on migrants and/or legally recognised refugees who entered their host countries not more than 10 years ago.

² To the extent that the available data allows, the focus is on migrants arriving into ECE member States from non-ECE member States. It should be noted that little comparable housing statistics for the target group exists in the region. In addition, since different ECE countries define the term 'migrant' differently (see **Box 1**), this influences the potential data collection for this target group.



The study is based on a literature review, nearly 20 interviews with selected representatives of international organisations, cities, housing providers, international banks and civil society; and an analysis of case studies of practices for housing for migrants at national, city and local levels in the ECE Region. Total over 60 practices are presented in the study.

The present document shares results and conclusions of the study; and recommendations. The document is structured in three sections. The first section describes key migration trends in the ECE region providing therefore the context for the discussion of housing for migrants. The second section examines general housing trends and challenges in the ECE region. The third section presents preliminary results of the analysis of innovative housing practices identified during the research. The document concludes with policy recommendations.

Section 1. Key migration³ trends

In recent years, international migration flows have risen to levels not witnessed since World War II (ECE, 2016:26). In 2015, the number of international migrants worldwide – people residing in a country other than their country of birth – was 244 million, the highest ever recorded (UN, 2016; IOM, 2017). The same year saw the highest levels of forced displacement globally recorded since World War II. According to UNHCR (2017), approximately 8% of all world migrants were refugees in 2015, while the total number of forcefully displaced people across various regions in the world reached 65.6 million in 2017. According to ECE (2016), both internal and international migration has substantially increased in the ECE region.

A key challenge in housing and urban development is to develop ways in which to adapt to the rapid demographic changes in the ECE region, in order to ensure access to affordable housing, more inclusive neighborhoods and a higher quality of life (UNECE, 2016). By ‘demographic changes’, we refer not only to the number of people who migrate, but also to certain characteristics of newly arrived populations:

³ The Housing for Migrants Study in preparation focuses on the new ‘migrants’ because of the special challenges they face in accessing housing and long-term integration, as noted in Box 1.

Firstly, the inflow of populations to urban centers has been dramatically increased due to continued national and international migration, as well as due to the increase in forced displacement. From 2010 to 2015, the number of asylum seekers has increased from 374,000 to 2.4 million.⁴ The number of refugees has doubled from 2 to 4.8⁵ million in the same period. The ECE member States and their cities have been affected differently by the reported population flows. ECE countries are affected differently. As main entry points to the area, Turkey, Greece and Italy receive a sustained amount of migrants. Turkey alone registered more than 2.7 million refugees on its territory in 2015 (UNHCR, 2016). Some other countries, such as the Balkan region and Hungary, see large amounts of migrants transiting their territory towards the European Union. According to the International Organisation for Migration (2015), about 3,000 people were crossing Macedonia's territory daily in September 2015, leading the government to declare a state of emergency. Some countries have turned into main reception points for migrants, experiencing a surge in asylum applications since 2011. In 2015, the five countries registering the highest number of asylum-seekers were, according to UNHCR (2016): Germany (420,625), the United States (286,168), Turkey (212,408), Sweden (157,046), Hungary (177,135) and Austria (80,065). While some received large numbers of new migrants, others served as transition corridors or have not been affected.

Secondly, today's migrants and refugees emerge as different from those in previous decades because they are very diverse in terms of country of origin, profile and motivation (OECD, 2012). As discussed in an International Monetary Fund report, they are also quite different from host populations when it comes to cultural background/language/education. This means that the ways in which they resettle and integrate (or not) into the society where they arrive are new and dynamic (Psoinos and Rosenfeld, 2017). A challenge for many cities is building strategies (including securing funding and finance) to adapt to rapid demographic changes, to ensure access to affordable housing, continued inclusive neighborhoods and a good quality of life.

⁴ According to the IOM (2017), the number of asylum claims worldwide increased from 558,000 pending applications at the end of 2014 to almost 1 million by the end of June 2015. This figure continued to increase, rising to about 3.2 million pending asylum applications globally by the end of 2015.

⁵ Estimates based on UNHCR, 2016; Eurostat, 2016 data.

Proposed definition of ‘migrant’ for the study

There is no universally agreed definition of what constitutes a ‘migrant’. Although the UN aimed to establish a set of common definitions of migratory movements, data collection is still guided by national legislative, administrative and policy needs. Different states and experts define migrants in many different ways – for instance, based on country of birth, citizenship, residency, duration of stay etc. This makes it very challenging to measure international migration, not to mention monitoring specific aspects of migrants’ lives, e.g. their health or housing trajectories.

There is also the term ‘refugee’ which is often used in two different senses. Sometimes, it includes all displaced persons who have applied for asylum in the country of resettlement, regardless of the outcome of their application. On other occasions, it refers to those who have been granted refugee status under the UN relevant conventions only.

Given a) the complexity in countries regarding refugees’ and asylum seekers’ rights to access services – including housing – and benefits, and b) the focus of this study not being on ‘people on the move’ but on those looking for housing, only the term ‘migrants’ is used throughout this study. To the extent that the data permits, the study focuses on vulnerable and disadvantaged newly arrived migrants from non-ECE countries.

Section II. Key housing trends

The study places the housing challenges faced by new migrants into the wider context of housing trends and challenges in the ECE region. Lack of housing affordability has been recognised as one of the most challenging outcomes of the global financial crisis. In 2015, the ECE study *Social Housing Models in the UNECE Region: Models, Trends and Challenges* highlighted that the aftershocks of the 2008 global financial crisis resulted in unprecedented housing need.⁶ At least 100 million low- and middle-income people in the ECE region were estimated to be housing cost overburdened,⁷ and social housing waiting lists were reported to have reached historical highs, with a marked increase in homelessness. In a context in which housing shortage and decreased affordability are already a major concern for ECE countries, accommodating large numbers of newcomers is a major issue for which innovative solutions are needed (UNECE, 2015).

The premise of the study is that national housing systems are varied and diverse. This difference is exemplified in the availability and mix of various housing tenures, models, social housing and general housing policy development, among other issues. The study also points out that ECE countries also differ by their immigration experience. Based on past and current immigration trends, the study divides the ECE member States into five broad categories: (1) long-standing destinations of international migration, (2) destinations with significant recent and humanitarian migration, (3) new destinations for recent labour migrants, (4) emerging destinations with small migrant populations, and (5) countries with migrant populations shaped by border changes.

In general terms, countries classified as ‘long-standing destinations of international migration’, and ‘destinations with significant recent and humanitarian migration’ have mature social housing systems and a comparatively high share of social housing stock (or other types of state-supported housing). They have also been primary destination countries in the recent migration crisis. Countries classified as ‘new destinations for recent labour migrants’ have typically been entry points for migrants in the recent migration crisis and, more recently, destinations for migrants. This group of countries has historical social housing policies but a significantly lower share of social housing stock than the previous group. ‘Countries with immigrant

⁶Available at: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=41388>

⁷ Spending more than 40% of their disposable income on housing

population shaped by border changes and emerging destinations with small migrant populations' are largely countries with economies in transition with a low share of social housing stock or new and emerging social housing policies. While a number of countries in this group have been classified as 'transition corridors' in the recent migration crisis, others have not been affected by it.

In destination countries, challenges in accessing affordable housing that were noted for the national population in ECE Social Housing Study (2015), now extend to new migrants as well. It should be noted that refugees and/or new migrants also face specific challenges that may prevent them from access existing (available) housing and, by extension, long-term integration prospects (e.g. education, employment⁸), even when their legal status is cleared. These challenges will be discussed in Section III, in conjunction with a preliminary view of solutions identified and designed to address them in selected countries and cities of the ECE region.

Section III. Housing challenges and solutions for new migrants

Access to decent and affordable housing is a fundamental human need and a human right. Access to medium- and long-term housing solutions in the years immediately following migrants' arrival in the host country is a critical element in their long-term integration prospects, including access to employment and education, among other issues. It is also a precondition for newcomers' integration into a new society. When considering challenges in housing for migrants and possible solutions for those challenges, it is deemed important to highlight that the housing systems in the ECE member States are varied and diverse along with their immigration policy and experience. Their response depends on the current state of national housing and immigration policies, their interaction as well as modes of implementation at national, regional or local levels. Mapping of the practices for housing migrants carried out for this study also revealed that these also depend on the creativity of individual cities, housing associations, NGOs and other civil society groups. Consequently, migrants' experience of reception, integration and access to housing may differ greatly between countries but also within them – depending on the capacity (and willingness) of each individual city, neighbourhood (or even household⁹) to absorb newcomers.

Considering the observed diversity, innovative solutions for housing of migrants exist in a variety of local tenures, levels of implementation (e.g. national, regional, local, etc.); and there is a variety of potential providers of the housing for migrants.

Despite the differences in housing systems across the ECE region, research consistently shows that housing disadvantage – difficulties in housing access and poor housing conditions – for migrants is widespread. According to European Web Site on Integration (EWSI) research (2016) conducted in 28 EU member countries, for instance, 'migrants are generally vulnerable on the housing market, disproportionately dependent on private rentals, more likely to be uninformed of their rights and discriminated against. They also face greater obstacles to access public housing or housing benefits and are more likely to live in substandard and poorly connected accommodation, with less space available and at a higher rental cost burden than the national average. Limited access to affordable housing options coupled with limited economic resources often result in migrants accepting sub-standard housing, in terms of size and/or quality, including overcrowded¹⁰ housing and

⁸ It should be noted that in number of countries the absence of an official address may hamper migrants' efforts to access education and job opportunities, making them dependent on aid and emergency services for a prolonged period of time.

⁹ Here we refer to solidarity practices in housing refugees at household level.

¹⁰ Due to a lack of command of the local language in the early stages of integration (in the early stages of language acquisition) migrants often opt for finding a home with the help of friends or countrymen (or within their ethnic communities). This leads to overcrowding, among other issues such as limited possibilities for integration. However, it is not only altruism that leads to overcrowding, co-habitation reduces the housing costs per capita.

non-housing facilities. The housing challenges in turn contribute to difficulties in integration and may by extension hamper overall efforts for social cohesion.’

Below is an overview of challenges related to housing of migrants and some available innovative practices for addressing these challenges as identified so far for the study on Housing for Migrants. This overview is organised as follows: each sub-section notes key identified challenges faced by new migrants in accessing housing; this is followed by a brief note on the practices designed to address each of these challenges to be included in the ECE Housing for Migrants Study compendium of innovative practices. Preliminary results have pointed to a number of lessons learned; an initial presentation of these and a discussion of the potential advancement of identified practices is contained in each subsection.

A. Challenge: lack of access to specific housing tenures¹¹

- 1) Home ownership**
- 2) Private rent**
- 3) Social housing**

1) Access to home ownership

Most of the ECE countries have adopted a market approach to housing provision. In most of the ECE member States, home ownership is a prevailing tenure (ECE, 2015). According to the OECD, as well as the ‘Zaragoza indicators’, home ownership is one of the core integration indicators¹² for migrant integration (along with the overcrowding rate¹³ and the housing cost overburden rate¹⁴). OECD (2012) research shows that migrants have a lower share of home ownership than the indigenous population in general terms. New migrants, who are the focus of this study, often have limited economic resources and the absence of personal employment, financial records and income history, are issues that often hamper access to credit for purchasing a home. The affordability of this option should be also considered¹⁵ (see UNECE 2015).

In selected countries with advanced economies, providing mortgages with preferential interest rates for new migrants has been trialled (e.g. Spain, Israel) prior to the global financial crisis, but recently largely abandoned. The ‘Solidarity based Savings Scheme’ available in Belgium addresses another challenge related to access to home ownership: a minimum **deposit for purchasing a dwelling** with mortgage finance. *Ciré* is a Belgian association operating as a network, gathering 24 non-profit organisations (e.g. *Convivial*), and across borders (e.g. Red Cross, Caritas), which implements activities to foster the integration of migrants. One of *Ciré*’s main activities is to foster the creation of solidarity-based saving schemes to enable access to home ownership for migrants.

While countries with economies in transition have not been heavily affected by the recent migration crisis, the effort to secure affordable home ownership for refugees in the past¹⁶ has focused on support for **self-building**.¹⁷

¹¹ The study recognised that UNECE member States define the term ‘social’ or ‘affordable’ housing differently (see UNECE, 2015), and it recognises that there may be slight differences in the interpretation of the terms ‘private rent’ and ‘home ownership’.

¹² The acquisition of property is seen as a sign of social upward mobility and long-term settlement.

¹³ Referring to the ratio between household rooms and number of household members.

¹⁴ The population share living in households that spend more than 40% of disposable income on housing.

¹⁵ However, in order to precisely access the challenges of ‘ethnic minority communities and immigrants’, research should be undertaken in each specific local housing market (along with possibilities for integration).

¹⁶ It should be noted that these practices have been designed to tackle the challenges of refugee migration in the 1990s and internal displacement. Countries with economies in transition have not been significantly affected by the current migration crisis or have served primarily as transition corridors.

¹⁷ This may include free or discounted provision of land, free or subsidised construction materials and/or technical assistance for construction.

More recently, practices relate to conditioning foreign real estate investment permission with provision of a specific number of affordable housing units for forcefully displaced population (e.g. Georgia).

While these schemes are innovative, they are not widely accessible. However, before moving towards examining other housing challenges faced by new migrants, the temporal dimension of migrant integration must be taken into account. Home ownership may be a strong indicator of integration and settlement, but it lacks a temporal dimension. Considering the fact that the focus of the study was to be on the access of new migrants (in the early years following their arrival in the host country), notwithstanding real economic and other challenges, the question should be posed as to whether home purchase is an immediate choice in the early years after arrival, when new migrants endeavour to rebuild their lives and understand their new environment. Rather than measuring the perceived ‘final outcome’ of the integration process, the focus of the study is on the process in the early years after arrival, the housing trajectory, and possibilities of accessing and climbing the housing ladder. This procedural stance is deemed important, as it intertwines with the process of early and medium-term integration.

2) Access to the private rental sector

The research shows that in the early years after arrival, new migrants often depend on the private rental sector. However, there are three common challenges related to new migrants’ access to private rented accommodation. The first is the affordability of such accommodation, the second information about how to access and sustain it (including the rights and responsibilities of private tenants), and the third is discrimination in access to private rented accommodation.

Affordability of private rent relates to the actual price of monthly rent, but more significantly to insurance and deposit requirements (often two to three months’ rental payment upfront at the commencement of a contract). Economic hardship may also relate to the cost of relocation. New migrants may also be unaware of the local rules relating to the rental sector and the ways to sustain the accommodation once they access it. The literature and research assessing the challenges facing new migrants in accessing private rental housing highlights the persistence of direct discrimination. For instance, UNHCR (2013) notes that private landlords often refuse to rent to beneficiaries of international protection¹⁸ or impose additional financial and/or administrative conditions. This may result in overcrowding, illegal rent, and sub-standard housing conditions, among other issues.

Innovative practices included in the database include various **types of financial support for access to the private rental sector**. The most typical among them is rent subsidy or housing allowance for which refugees may be eligible once their status is legally cleared. For instance, in Romania, a so-called ‘Conditional Rental Subsidy’ covering 50% of private rent is available for one year to refugees who have completed the local integration programme but were not admitted to social housing. A similar scheme is available in Belgium under ‘Rehousing allowance’, contributing to relocation costs and a percentage of monthly rent. The ‘Welcome Fund for Syrian Refugees’ is another type of subsidy available in Canada. Unlike rental subsidy, the Canadian scheme provides a monthly allowance to cover general household expenses, including private rent for one year.

¹⁸ ‘Beneficiary of international protection’ means a person who has been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection status. In this context, ‘refugee status’ means the recognition by a Member State of a third-country national or a stateless person as a refugee; ‘subsidiary protection status’ means the recognition by a Member State of a third-country national or a stateless person as a person eligible for subsidiary protection.

Information and mediation services, already mentioned as a separate service for refugees in the transition period, may be also available for orientation in the private rental sector in selected locations in some countries. For instance, *Wohndrehscheibe*¹⁹ in Vienna offers advice and guidance for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups to access housing in the private rental market. Over 70% of beneficiaries have a migrant background.

Perhaps the most innovative among the schemes available for the private rental sector in selected countries are: **(1) local authority guarantees** for accepting refugees for private rent available in certain local authorities in Greece. The scheme guarantees payment of expenses to landlords²⁰ who agree to rent their premises to refugees; **(2) Integrated services**, combining the benefits of all the approaches mentioned in this section, notably: **combining funding, information and mediation**. Such examples are *Convivial* in Belgium and the Programme for Immigrant's Access to Housing in Spain.

The review of housing initiatives in the private rental sector reveals significant innovation and a variety of options designed to help migrants access this tenure. However, as is the case in other categories, these are not available everywhere. While financial assistance is usually available on a national level, more innovative practices such as local authority guarantees, information and mediation services, are usually available only locally (at city or neighbourhood level). Perhaps the issue that needs to be underlined is also that tenants in the private rental sector may not have direct access to integration services (which may be directly available in social or transitional housing managed by housing associations or municipalities). This means that these need to be available separately and made accessible.

3) Access to social housing

The availability of the social housing sector provides governments with a controllable instrument of policy within which to mediate access to this affordable housing tenure as well as actively influence integration with accompanying programmes. However, before moving to address this issue in more detail, it should be noted that social housing sectors in the ECE region differ significantly. Nonetheless, the shortage of social housing as an affordable housing option is a shared concern (ECE, 2015). The concerns raised in international literature related to access to this housing tenure are eligibility criteria and time spent on waiting lists.

A common challenge for new migrants is the requirement to reside in a specific locality for a defined period in order to apply to (or be eligible for) the social housing waiting list. This period may span from two to ten years. In building the application file, practices for requiring marriage, divorce, birth certificates as a standard part of the application procedure UNHCR (2013a) may present an obstacle for migrants escaping conflict zones. Finally, once eligibility is established, the waiting period may still be relatively long, unless there are special arrangements and regulations that put this group on a priority list.²¹

While access to social and affordable housing is recognised to be paramount in securing a stable housing situation, it has been increasingly recognised that 'a roof over one's head' is not sufficient for new migrants to integrate into a host society. This study has identified several **innovative social housing practices that provide social housing coupled with integration services**, in an effort to aid this process. In the Netherlands, the *Startblock*, for example, combines industrialised building for the fast supply of housing, with an innovative integration programme that fosters co-management of the estate, and co-habitation of local young adolescents and those with recent refugee experience. In Serbia, Germany and Austria, the Social Housing in Supportive

¹⁹ *Wohndrehscheibe* – Wien. Available from: <http://www.volkshilfe-wien.at/wohnungslosenhilfe/wohndrehscheibe/>

²⁰ In case the tenant refugees fail to do so.

²¹ It should be highlighted that elevating ethnic community members and migrants on priority lists may be politically sensitive especially in the areas with affordable housing shortage. The needs of the local population and the newcomers must be delicately balanced.

Environment (SHSE), the *Staudenhof* project and Inter-Ethnic Housing Estates (*Globaler Hof*) respectively illustrate how both design and the fostering of positive relationships between residents of different origins can enable refugees to integrate into a host society. Finally, The Reach In project in the United Kingdom illustrates how housing providers can benefit from refugees' knowledge in adapting their services to populations with a migration background.

Social housing plays an important role in addressing housing affordability for vulnerable populations in general. While the listed initiatives are innovative, especially in terms of provision of both housing and integration services, the shortage of social housing presents a challenge. In the absence of priority lists, refugees may wait for a long period of time to access this tenure. On the other hand, establishing priority lists requires strategies to address possible tensions between different vulnerable groups potentially eligible for this tenure. The key innovation in the provision of affordable housing is of a technical nature, where industrialised systems of rapid construction are experimented with. In terms of social integration and employment renewal, the initiatives seem to bring benefits to the migrants and the local population. However, similar to the transition and information practices, these solutions are not large-scale and usually²² available only locally. Cities and housing providers alike report challenges in increasing the number of social housing units in localities with observed housing needs (see EUKN, 2016).

B. Challenge: barriers for securing independent accommodation

The lack of access to information²³ and limited resources, combined with a limited command of the local language are some of the key barriers to accessing housing (regardless of housing tenure) in the early years after migrant arrival. In the case of refugees and asylum seekers, once granted the right to remain, they are generally obliged to vacate their place in the emergency centre after a period between three weeks to a year, depending on the country in question.²⁴ This transition period is considered to be particularly risky, since the probability of becoming homeless is high.²⁵

The ECE study has identified four types of housing initiatives that help address these challenges. These are:

- 1) Information and mediation services**
- 2) Financial support**
- 3) Transitional housing**
- 4) Combined initiatives (financial support, information and mediation services).**

- 1) In order to enable early access to housing and limit the occurrence of homelessness among migrants, a number of organizations in selected countries have established **welcome information services and helpdesks** for the newly-arrived. While some provide general assistance for house searches in the private housing market and access to transitional and social housing (if locally available), the innovative among them also endeavour to address the barriers preventing new migrants from securing independent accommodation, and provide **mediation services** (with local landlords) to enable access to social housing

²² Apart from large-scale construction in Germany

²³ This also includes cases where the housing systems between the country of origin and host country are so different that they do not provide a useful point of reference. New migrants (regardless of their economic status) must examine and develop an understanding of the housing system in the host country in order to access affordable decent housing.

²⁴ Clearly, the cases of overstay in the emergency centres have been noted as well. These challenges require separate examination.

²⁵ Significantly, the requirement to leave emergency accommodation may occur at the same time as the newly recognised refugee becomes eligible to work in the host country.

and quality private rentals. As noted in the section on private rent, these include Vienna's *Wohndrehscheibe*²⁶ and *Convivial*²⁷ in Belgium, which provide information on housing issues, such as the functioning of the local housing market, eligibility or access to social housing, along with other relevant topical information (health system, education etc.). Information about anti-discrimination laws is also provided in selected projects, in an effort to prevent and limit housing disadvantage in both the public and private housing sectors.

- 2) **Financial support** for access to housing is generally provided for **private rent** (as noted in the previous section) and may be available in some cases for **social housing** sector as well. The financial support is usually provided on a national scale and for a limited period of time. As noted in the section on home ownership in selected countries, financial support may be available for home ownership as well, but is rather exceptional.
- 3) **Transitional housing options** enable short to medium stays after vacating emergency accommodation. These are typically accommodation facilities such as hostels that accept applications from both refugees and the local homeless population. They are normally established by local authorities and/or local housing associations in locations where homelessness among new migrants (refugees and asylum seekers) has been on the rise. Examples include the Station Foyer in the UK, Three stage transitional housing in Germany and ADOMA in France. The facilities allow three to six-month residences in transitional housing. Perhaps one of the most innovative aspects of the transitional housing initiatives is that they combine housing with information services (noted above) and help refugees' access employment and long-term housing, thus addressing their integration needs.
- 4) While these initiatives address important structural challenges faced by new migrants in specific contexts, the difficulty is that they have relatively limited coverage and reach. The comprehensive information and mediation services noted here are usually provided in selected local authorities only. Languages in which the information is available are limited²⁸ (in the centres and online). Transitional housing can be distinguished as some of the most innovative practice (for the early years following arrival); apart from providing housing, they provide comprehensive integration and training services (while the information and mediation services by definition of their purpose do not). However, it is relatively limited in supply and, when accessed, can only be used for limited amount of time (typically 6 months to a year).

C. Challenge: housing shortages and generating medium- and long-term housing solutions

Clearly, the lack of affordable housing presents a structural challenge. In locations that lack affordable housing options for the local population in need, these solutions are also challenging for the migrant population. In other locations, the lack of affordable housing may co-exist with dilapidated and empty properties that are not in use. Therefore, **provision of affordable²⁹ housing and effective use of existing stock** are important. The ECE study identified three distinct approaches that were designed to respond to the challenges of effective affordable housing supply. The results can be classified as follows:

²⁶ Vienna's *Wohndrehscheibe* has two main dimensions: (1) The provision of information on opportunities and rights in terms of housing, and (2) the provision of specific know-how for house hunting. Additionally, beneficiaries lacking financial resources are supported by social workers who help them in accessing governmental aid.

²⁷ *Convivial*, mouvement d'insertion des réfugiés - Belgium. Available from: <http://convivial.be/>

²⁸ The research into innovative practices was carried out in English, Spanish and French; however the access to housing information was still challenging to find in languages other than those in host countries.

²⁹ The term 'affordable housing' is used broadly here to cover different supported tenures, e.g. social housing, affordable private rent and affordable home ownership options (such as collaborative housing or shared ownership).

- 1) **Solidarity housing**
- 2) **Urban and housing practices**
- 3) **Innovative housing supply methods**

- 1) Solidarity practices provide accommodation within the existing housing stock. Provided primarily by members of civil society, individuals and NGOs, **solidarity practices** respond to the challenges related to the transitional period after vacating emergency accommodation and lack of affordable housing options. They provide accommodation (rooms or homes with or without charge) in the homes of private citizens (host community). Solidarity practices identified for this study include:
 - (a) online networks for matching refugees and individual citizens/organisations willing to host them – Refugees Welcome³⁰ and Refugee Hero,³¹ for example, are non-profit organisations that match refugees with private citizens willing to host them;
 - (b) private sponsorship schemes, one of which is the Canadian private sponsorship scheme, which has been running since the 1980s; and,
 - (c) church networks and housing cooperatives taking migrants as full-time members. The integration into these practices is provided through direct daily interaction with the host.
- 2) **Regeneration and renewal of dilapidated and empty properties** has been recorded as good practice in localities experiencing over-supply of housing but lack of affordable housing for new migrants. We highlight practices in the US, UK, Italy and France. In the US, the municipality of Cleveland designed a project to revitalise three decaying neighbourhoods with help of private developers to create affordable housing for new migrants. In France, the ADOMA project launched an initiative to renew the former dormitories (a type of social housing) while elevating their energy standard to ‘Nearly Zero Energy Building’ and turning them into dwellings for refugees. The Canopy project in the UK took a different path – it engaged the future beneficiaries of the project, refugees and homeless people, in the renovation of local dilapidated housing units, supported by Leeds City Council. A similar practice has been noted in Italy, where refugees and migrants have been engaged to work both on the revitalisation of their future accommodation and on the city centre in Riace and Satriano. Integration in some of these projects is secured through direct involvement in the renovation of the properties with local providers and companies.
- 3) **Innovative housing supply methods or industrialised construction techniques** have been increasingly employed in Germany,³² Austria and the Netherlands. The high level of prefabrication allows the assembly of housing complexes in a considerably shorter time (up to 40%) than in the case of traditional construction. While the cost is also reduced by an average of 30%, it should be also noted that increasing the construction speed needed at times to be coupled with a temporary freeze in housing standards. Germany experienced a significant increase of refugee arrivals, and has exceptionally agreed to rewrite the building code to allow for lower standards of housing. This was done in order to enable the construction of prefabricated dwellings under government contracts. In the Netherlands, much smaller projects using the prefabricated habitation cells were used to build *Startblock* projects in record time.

Solidarity practices utilising online networks internationally are some of the most innovative practices identified. However, while they rest on the premise of integration through co-habitation with the local

³⁰ Refugees Welcome works in 12 European countries, plus Canada and Australia. Available at: <http://www.refugees-welcome.net/#details>

³¹ Refugee Hero, similar to Airbnb (but for refugees) works all over the world where landlords are willing to host refugees. Available from: <http://www.refugeehero.com/>

³² Import and export of prefabricated elements is also noted in Europe to facilitate this process.

population, they may not take into consideration the full intensity of the integration process for local hosts. Integration services supporting hosts and migrants may be of benefit. The study has identified a number of practices increasing the effective affordable housing supply in locations in need. While these are clearly innovative in many aspects, those that perhaps provide the most benefit in terms of integration are the ones involving the beneficiary population in the process, thus providing employment and integration through interaction with the host community. The limitations that these initiatives face are similar to the first group in that they are relatively limited in supply and the number of migrants they accommodate. Apart from the German national programme for increasing housing supply, they resemble pilots rather than common practice.

Recommendations

This section presents recommendations of the study that emerged so far through the analysis of case studies, the literature review and interviews with the experts and important stakeholders.

(a) Supporting social mobility of new migrants and vulnerable groups through the housing continuum approach

The housing systems in ECE member States are characterized by their great diversity. The mapping of innovative practices for housing showed that this variety and richness is also present in housing solutions for new migrants. The solutions have been designed and trialled along the housing continuum beyond emergency shelters to cover transitional housing, social housing, affordable rent, affordable home ownership as well as private rent and home ownership. In localities where a wide variety of affordable housing options are available along with comprehensive long-term integration strategies, the ‘housing continuum’ approach enables migrants to climb the housing ladder, supports their social mobility and supports the long-term integration process. The challenge at the moment is that the reported solutions are on a relatively small scale, often in the form of pilots; they cater for a limited number of migrants. An additional challenge is that the solutions reported are seldom available in the same locality. There is a continuing need for housing policy to support tenure-balanced housing provision and a wide range of affordable housing options to enable the social mobility of the most vulnerable new migrants and social cohesion in general.³³

(b) Moving towards ‘dynamic and multi-level’ approach of migrant integration

A comprehensive examination of the cutting-edge literature in human geography, psychology and sociology suggests that integration is an increasingly dynamic and multi-level process. This process, among other issues, rests on the interaction between the host community and the newcomers. Calls for migrant and service providers to collaborate in the design and set-up of necessary services and learn together are on the increase. In the context of housing and integration, two points of counsel are highlighted:

(c) Engagement of beneficiaries in housing policy and project design

The engagement and participation of beneficiaries (in this case new migrants) in housing policy and project design is of key importance to secure relevant information on experiences and needs at both national and city levels.

While some innovative practices exist, the study found that housing and integration policies are often policy areas with limited engagement of beneficiaries – new migrants. By focusing on medium- to long-term housing solutions, the study emphasizes the long-term and multi-dimensional nature of integration. In line with this

³³https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/sessions/docs2015/HABITAT_III_Regional_Report_for_UNECE_Region.pdf

vision, it advises that strategies should be designed for the active participation of migrants in policy-making and in the implementation process. This can take several forms – for example, panels or advisory groups, training and employment of new migrants in local housing services, direct involvement of new migrants in the provision or revitalization of housing. Beyond common integration programmes, such participation in the public life of the host country is also a form of integration that helps those involved but also other migrants who benefit from the information shared by those engaged.

(d) Engagement of the host communities in the process of new migrant integration

Integration is a multi-dimensional process (Psoinos and Rosenfeld, 2017) that by its very nature requires interaction between the newcomers and the host community. The research shows that such interaction may be challenging in normal circumstances (Ponzo, 2010). However, scarcity and austerity may add an additional level of complexity. The housing crisis and its ramifications revealed an increased and unmet housing need across the ECE region. The interviews conducted for this research underlined the challenges related to meeting the housing needs of the local low-income and vulnerable population. They highlighted the challenge of providing (or allocating) scarce housing resources to newcomers in this context. The results suggest that it is also important to balance the housing allocation of the local population in need with that of new migrants. In this context, preparation and engagement of host communities (including accessing capacities for absorption) is of vital importance to ensure integration is possible in specific host localities.

(e) Integrated approach to housing for migrants projects

Housing and integration matters bring together numerous sectors and disciplines. If treated as a mere part of other disciplines, the solutions are unlikely to bring impactful results. In response to the migrant crisis, many local authorities, housing providers and individuals have shown interest and commitment to this field. The interviews with the representatives of local and central government highlight that the examination of the governance structures tasked to implement housing and integration programmes for migrants is of vital importance as well. In the past two decades, there has been an important move toward decentralisation of (general) housing responsibilities to local authorities. It should be noted, however, that the competences to ensure housing and integration of migrants are divided between different tiers of government, both vertically and horizontally. For positive results, an integrated approach to migrant integration, with clear roles and responsibilities, and collaboration between different tiers of government and disciplines, are of key importance.

(f) Integration of international efforts in housing migrants

The need to adjust national policies for the provision of affordable adequate housing as a response to the economic, financial and migration crises has been discussed in different forums by governments, not least during annual sessions of the intergovernmental ECE Committee of Housing and Land Management, which joins high-level officials responsible for housing and land management in 56 countries in the ECE region. There is increased interest in re-balancing the tenures and searching for new and innovative solutions. The mapping and analysis of the innovative solutions for the housing and integration of new migrants in the early years following their arrival shows the creativity and commitment of cities, housing providers, NGOs and civil society in general. International organizations should support this enthusiasm and energy, and help efforts to improve access to medium- and long-term housing solutions for migrants. International organizations are seen as the hubs of knowledge exchange. They should establish long-term commitments to the housing migrants' data collection, best practice mapping and exchange, as well as capacity-building.

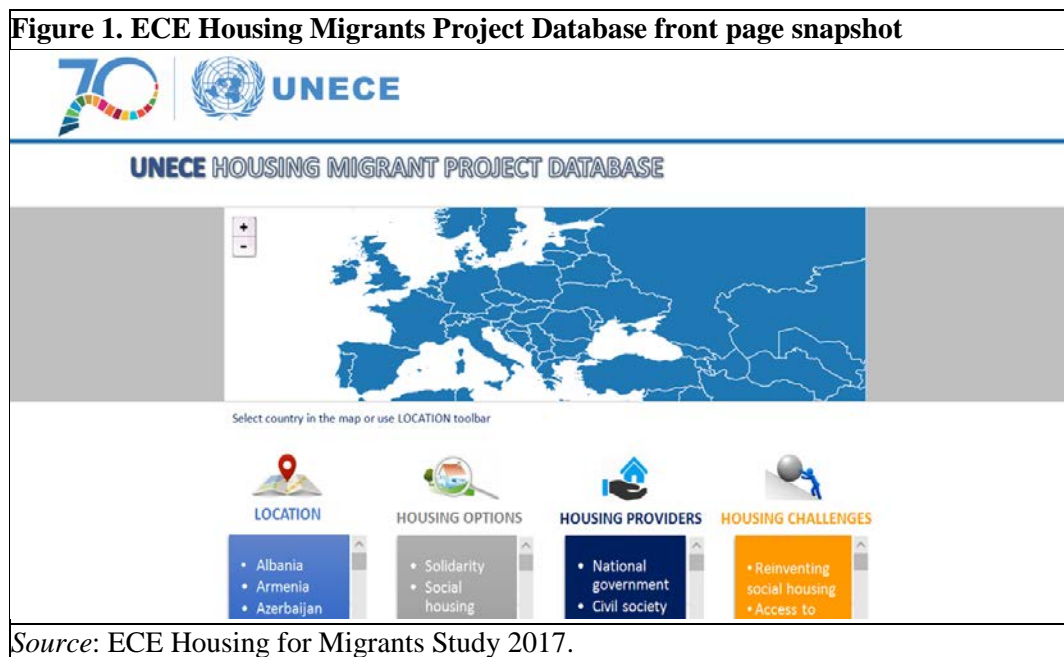
International organizations should unite their efforts. Each has its own expertise and strength and by combining efforts, housing migrants can become an integrating concern, effecting a stronger impact in promoting social mobility and social cohesion for all.

Next steps

The analysis that has been carried out as part of the study has shown the commitment and creativity of cities, housing providers and civil society at large in designing and providing a rich variety of housing tenures and solutions for newcomers. A possible output of the study might be the development of a compendium of innovative (and informative) practices focused on access to housing in the early years following migrants' arrival in a host country (or locality). Considering the diversity of the national housing systems among the ECE member States as well as an awareness of the fragmentation of local housing markets (including a different tenure mix at city levels), the goal is to continue gathering as rich a variety of housing practices as possible, which (a) respond to the observed challenges; (b) cover all common housing tenures (as well as locally emerging ones, where relevant); (c) cover a variety of housing providers from all public, private and civil society; and (d) are found at various locations (where the practices were identified as available).

The forthcoming study and its compendium of informative practices are envisaged to provide a dynamic tool for addressing housing and integration challenges in different local contexts, and to provide counsel for the future of new migrant housing initiatives at the international level.

Next steps³⁴: ECE Housing for Migrants Projects Database



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³⁴ Subject to resources availability.

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