



Combining the Social with the Climate Agenda: Reusing Vacant Real Estate

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We build strength, stability and self-reliance through shelter.

The housing and the climate challenge

- **95 million**

of Europeans live at risk of poverty

- **895 000**

people in Europe are experiencing homelessness each night

- **About 4.1 million**

people in the EU are exposed to homelessness each year

- **18% of households** live in overcrowded conditions

- The buildings sector is a key contributor to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, **representing 35%** of energy-related EU emissions

- **30 million**

homes in Europe are empty (35% of total buildings are under-occupied)

Habitat's initiative: Increase affordable housing AND decarbonize the building sector

Vacant real estate: a unique opportunity to address the affordable housing crisis AND do it in a way which is less harmful for the climate than greenfield new construction

The goal is to improve the housing sector to where an innovative and more holistic approach to providing affordable housing solutions is supported through policy interventions and key stakeholders collaboration

A interconnection between intersectorial approach and targeting the issue of housing inaccessibility to all social classes with directly interacts with the construction sector's impact on climate

Piloting the concept



Research



Prepare ToR, identify researchers, development of regional research framework, additional research UK&PL



Demonstrate



Identify construction site in PL&UK, reconstruction works in PL&UK



Collect, analyse, interpret data



Analysis of existing and development of new financial models, develop a framework for embodied carbon calculations, regular monitoring report



Strengthen partnerships



Leverage expertise, Build a network, engage communities

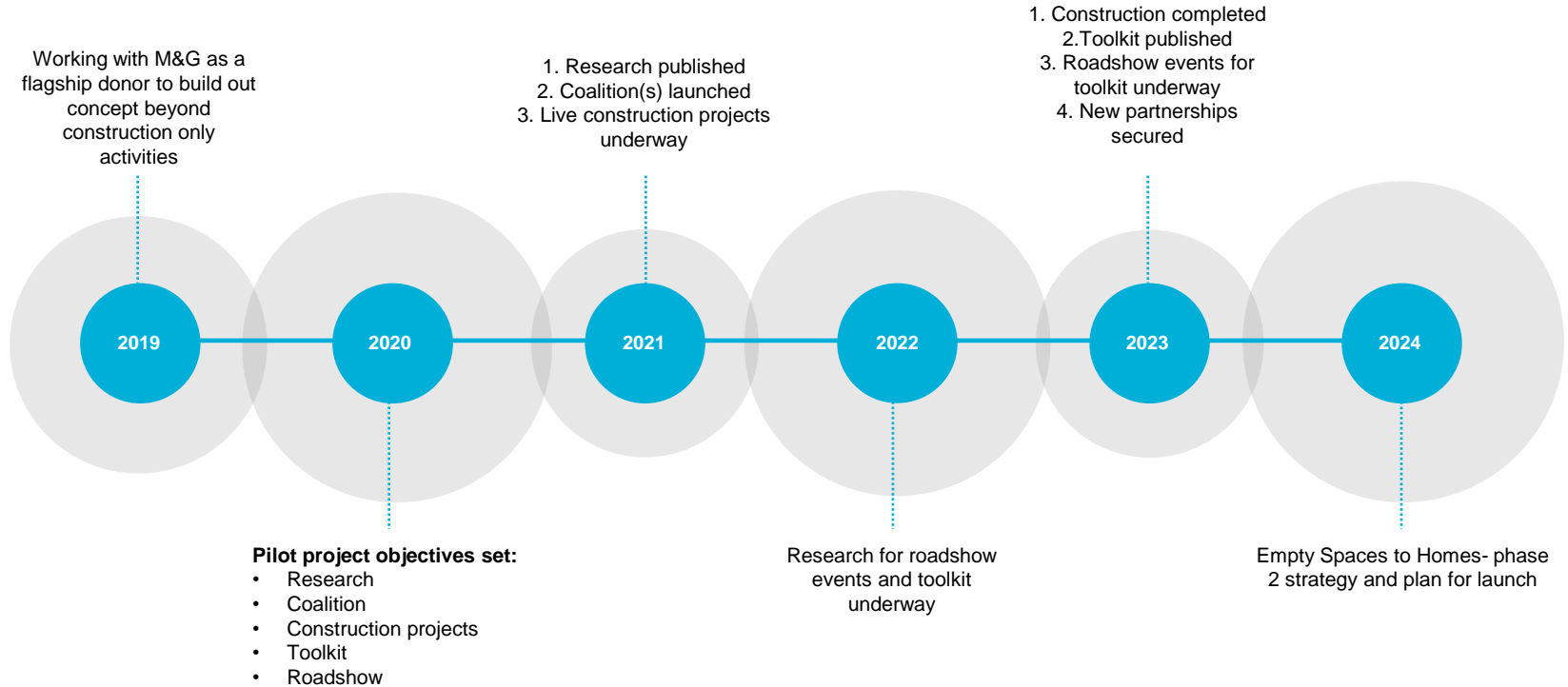


Advocate for policy change

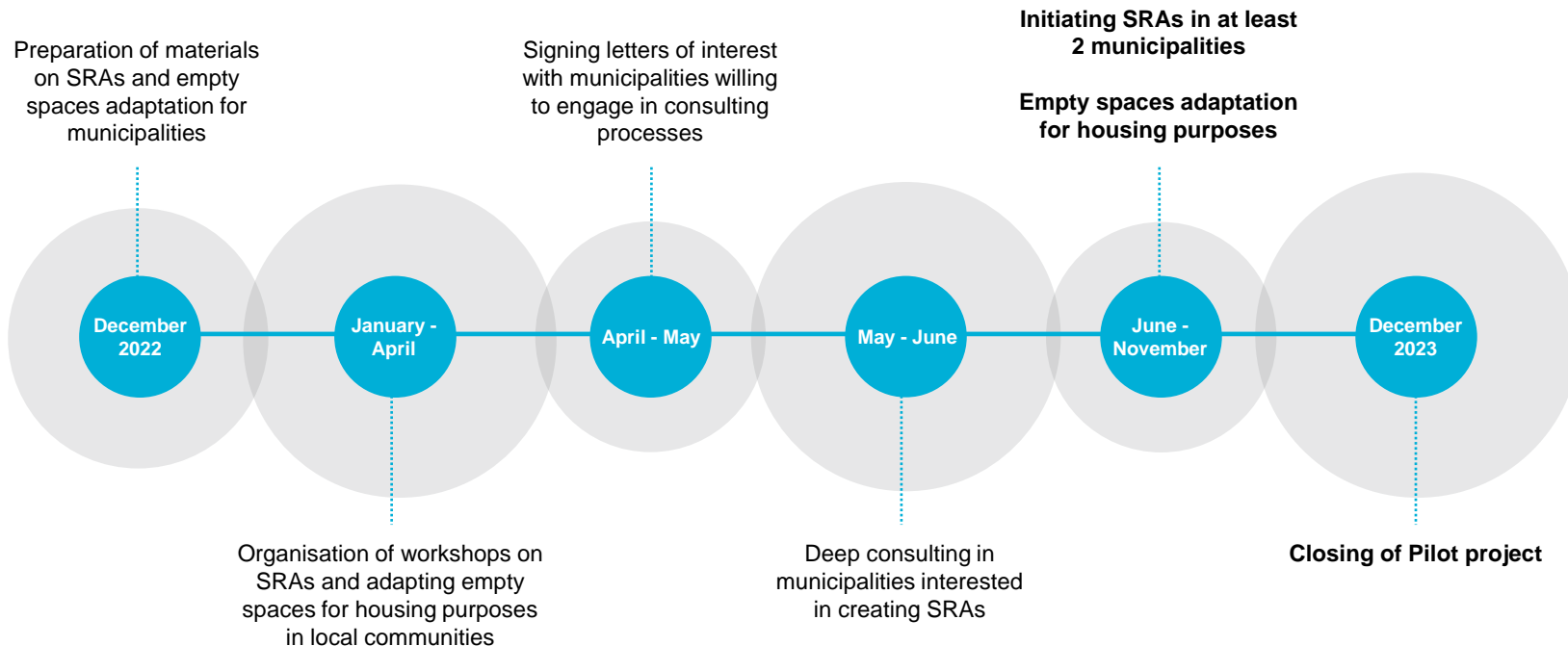


Advocate ESTHer at all levels – European, national, local. Position papers, meetings with government representatives, monitoring of new laws and regulations

What was done: UK



What was done: Poland



Turning empty spaces as catalysts of inclusive communities



Empty Spaces renovations in Warsaw:

- decent housing conditions,
- social mix in the buildings,
- long-term affordability (especially if renovations done in cooperation with local authorities),
- modernization and use of existing stock.



PRZED/PO

Our planned outcomes are ambitious yet achievable:



We will provide more sustainable housing for vulnerable populations, utilizing and repurposing existing buildings.



We will enhance the housing sector by promoting a supportive environment through policy interventions and stakeholder collaboration.



We will develop new financial models to support the transition to carbon-neutral housing, promoting energy efficiency and the reuse of embodied carbon in construction.



We will advocate for a paradigm shift in housing policy, emphasizing space sufficiency, transformation, and value creation over the construction of new housing.

Key policy messages

- Refurbishing vacant real estate into social or affordable housing provides a unique opportunity to address the housing affordability crisis and at the same time reduce the carbon footprint of the construction sector, this way we can combine a social agenda with the climate agenda.
- In Central and Eastern Europe and in Central Asia where for historic reasons (huge privatization of social housing in early 90s) there is not a well-functioning affordable rental sector, we need alternative models for governance like the Social Rental Agency model to meet the huge demand for social housing. Using vacant real estate is more climate friendly than greenfield new construction of social housing.

Advocating at EU level

- Establish a common definition of 'vacant real estate' (residential, commercial, private and public) to ensure consistent data collection and resource allocation across the EU Member States. Vacant real estate represents a significant and underutilized opportunity to address the housing crisis in Europe, with clear social, economic and climate change mitigation benefits.
- • Lead an EU-wide research project to map vacant and underutilized properties and monitor housing affordability across Europe.
- • Launch awareness-raising campaigns around the benefits of circular re-using of vacant real estate to support the decarbonization of the buildings sector.
- • Earmark dedicated funds in existing programs, such as the European Regional Development Fund, to develop these tools.
- [Habitat for Humanity EU Manifesto](#), Aug 2024
- [Manifesto – Practical Policies for a Just and Resilient Build Environment](#), Sept 2024

Thank You!

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