

## EDITORIAL

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### Researchers shaping global dialogue on housing systems

Our diverse housing research community is part of a global village influencing housing policy, and through a recent project it has shown how collaboration in a time of crises can be effectively mobilised to produce something of tangible global benefit for all. Thus in these dark Winter months, I come with good news, and an offer: a free downloadable gift! Let me share with you news of an important collaborative project called #Housing2030.

#Housing2030 kept many ENHR researchers busy over these challenging COVID-19 months. The now published UN report aims to strengthen the capacity of national and local governments to formulate policies that improve housing affordability and its social and environmental sustainability. The policy tools integrate themes such as governance, land, finance and climate neutrality. Beyond aspirations, it is a tough and forthright contribution, providing many arguments for reform to shape better housing systems.

The partners in this project include UNECE Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management, established in 1947. This is the only intergovernmental body addressing the housing and urban development challenges of countries in Europe, North America and Asia. Also involved is the UN Human Settlements Programme (Habitat). Established in 1978, it focuses on sustainable urban development and has led the implementation of the renowned and influential Sustainable Development Goals. Housing Europe is a network of 45 national and regional federations of public, social and cooperative housing providers operating in 24 countries and managing around 25 million homes. By combining their vision, policy know how and practical expertise, this extraordinary international collaboration has built global commitment and capacity to policies ensuring affordable and sustainable housing for all.

Way back in 2019 the #Housing2030 partnership sprung to life, bringing together for the first time the partners UNECE, UN Habitat and Housing Europe as one team, and commissioning researchers to draft chapters for a report on tools to shape better housing systems that deliver more affordable, inclusive and sustainable outcomes. Key members of this team included Michelle Norris, Holger Wallbaum and myself as lead author, with contributions from Kat Grimsley, Núria Lambea Llop and Sergio Nasarre-Aznar. Yet this was no ordinary project of a few weeks. It became a vocation involving many hours of discussion, debate and sustained commitment from all involved over a period of two years.

For this effort I would like to thank first and foremost the many ENHR members who provided research evidence, reflective wisdom and also constructive criticism on relevant policy tools and their illustration over the past two years. In particular, researchers who proactively informed the research process, include Manuel Aalbers, Mike Berry, Luigi Cuna, Vivienne Milligan, Jago Dodson, Dennis Keating, Alice Pittini, Wolfgang Amann, Gertjan Wijberg, Luis Mendes, Toby Lloyd, Jelke Bosma, Gerald Kössl, József Hegedüs, Michalis Goudis, Ken Gibb, Josh Ryan-Collins, Iván Tosics, Jean-Pierre Schaeffer, Richard Waldron, Carolyn Whitzman, Matteo Tarantino, Olivier Richard, Steffen Wetzstein, and many more, contributing to a lively and influential policy research process. Eventually, webinars involved more than 1,200 participants directly and this engagement was extended through surveys, podcasts and an interactive website, all enabling a much bigger audience. These many contributions, acknowledged in the report, have not been wasted.

As with all collaborative projects, an effective organisational structure had to be established, in addition to the drafting team. Project co-ordination was led by the key partners mentioned above, who in turn were also supported by expert sounding boards from their member states

and association members. The project also had two public champions, a very experienced public servant and former Director General for Housing Policy Elena Szolgayova from Slovakia and an industry leader in affordable housing David Orr from the National Housing Federation in the UK. Overall the team was accountable to the 56 governments of the UNECE region, extending all the way from the US to central Europe and Russia.

As mentioned, the study covered four interactive themes: governance of markets, land policy, shaping financial circuits and standards of climate neutral housing and neighbourhoods. Relevant research was reviewed by the authors and discussed in a series of three preparatory podcasts, followed by eight thematic and regional focused webinars involving expert presenters and good practice pitch makers, leading to a draft chapter for the report. This was extensively reviewed by member states, consumer advocacy and industry bodies. This process took 15 months, there after the report was edited to UN standards and the summary translated into English, French and Russian. The draft report was circulated to 56 Member states in June 2020 and presented at the Ministerial meeting in Geneva in October 2021, with many Ministers making statements and committing to an Action Plan to implement the recommendations of the report. The full report has since been translated into Russian by UN staff.

It should be noted, that very important practical support, in surveying member states, organising expert webinars, producing podcasts, filming events and establishing the interactive website was provided by permanent staff of the partner organisations: Gulnara Roll (UNECE), Christophe Lalande (UN Habitat) and Sorcha Edwards and Dara Turnbull (Housing Europe), who played a steady and sustained role to keep the project on track and communicate with the world.

The final report #Housing2030 provides a 'tool kit' rather than a universal 'blueprint', to respond to the different and changing demands of member states and regions. In an accessible and practical manner, it defines key concepts and 30 policy tools, drawn from the experience of over 50 countries. Tools concern land policy and planning strategies, funding and financing instruments, and approaches to good governance and regulation as well as environmental and energy standards for a more sustainable future. 70 clear illustrations show how these policy tools have been implemented, pointing out what makes them best practice and providing useful links to a wealth of contacts and resources. The final report was presented at the UNECE Ministerial meeting in Geneva (October 2021) alongside an [Action Plan](#) for implementation.

Over the past two months #Housing2030 has not stood still, but has engaged with discussions at various city, national and international conferences from Glasgow at COP26 to the European Housing Forum in Poland and Barcelona's Housing and Renovation Forum. There have even been small films made about it circulating the Twittersphere. #Housing2030 will soon feature on housing conference programs in Switzerland, Montenegro and Australia. Yet never fear, there is no need to travel, ENHR members can simply download a copy of [the report](#) "Effective policies for affordable housing in the UNECE region" and also enjoy the many podcasts and videos contained on the interactive website [www.housing2030.org](http://www.housing2030.org).

Finally, I would also like to express my gratitude to the Housing Agency of Ireland, the Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA), the Slovenian Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning and the Czech Ministry of Regional Development for their support to the #Housing2030 Initiative and the preparation of this publication.

Happy reading and best wishes for the year ahead,

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