

## **Housing Industry: Transfer of Know-How across National Boundaries**

First European Summer School brings together experts and professionals from all over Europe

**Frameworks in the housing industry differ greatly from one European country to another. At the same time, however, companies are faced with the same issues such as demographic change, energy efficiency, integration and digitisation. This makes the exchange of ideas across boundaries even more important. During the European Summer School at EBZ in Bochum about 30 young professionals from nine European countries shared experiences of similarities and differences, and focused on possible solutions.**

While every European country has a housing sector that is not exclusively market-oriented, the countries do not share a single definition of – let alone a legal framework for – social housing. Moreover, countries such as Spain and Latvia have a high percentage of private residential property. Common to all countries, however, is the fact that affordable housing grows scarce and both rental fees and sales prices rise, which makes the housing market increasingly more competitive. The creation of housing space can hardly keep up with the rising demand – this was the first thing that the participants of the Summer School agreed upon. The young professionals came to Bochum from the Netherlands, Great Britain, Spain, Italy, Sweden, Finland and Latvia and mostly work at housing associations. Some participants also were from service providers related to the housing industry, or academia, which enabled both international and interdisciplinary exchange within the group.

The demographic development is similar in each country: overall populations shrink and there is not enough housing space suitable for increasingly ageing societies. According to the participants from Clarion Housing Group, a British housing corporation with 125,000 homes, there are currently about 500,000 housing units for elderly people who are in need of support and possibly care. By 2030 the group of 65-and-older will have grown from 11.8 million to 17.5 million. But how to motivate long-time tenants to move to apartments more suitable for their current situation (smaller, more easily accessible)? What is the right mixture of ages for a neighbourhood? Do models of intergenerational living work or would elderly people prefer living amongst themselves? Should elderly tenants be located in neighbourhoods which are as accessible as possible and provide all necessary services? All of these questions were discussed by the participants – and even if it was not possible to find immediate answers to all of them it was still possible to identify similar problems and examine possible solutions.

At first glance and despite a common EU policy, the topic of energy efficiency was dominated by national differences for example in terms of national energy systems or accounting of heating expenses for individual households. For instance, compared to the Netherlands (20

ct/kWh) or France (16 ct/kWh) Germany is characterised by high electricity prices (30 ct/kWh). In Great Britain, electricity prices are lower but energy poverty in social housing is an important issue that affects roughly 2.3 million households. Similarly, in Spain about 11% of the population cannot afford proper heating. Reasons for this are low income and high consumption; the latter due to low energy efficiency of building and national social security systems (in Germany, for example, heating expenses of welfare recipients are covered by the state).

As far as building stock is concerned, all countries face a similar challenge: reaching the pan-European goal of carbon-neutral building stock by 2050. According to Clarion Housing Group there are about 7 million uninsulated buildings in Great Britain. In Sweden one million apartment units were constructed during the “Million Programme” (*Miljonprogrammet*) in the 1960s and 70s (about 25% of the entire Swedish building stock). These have to be made more energy efficient and adapted to the needs of an ageing society – with estimated costs of 37.3 billion euros. Another important aspect is user behaviour: In many countries, among them the Netherlands, Finland, Spain or Sweden, housing corporations or government agencies offer campaigns and counselling sessions on energy efficient behaviour. Due to the fact that there is no systematic analysis of results and success factors, the need for more in-depth research on a European scale became apparent.

The conclusion of the Summer School was that it was the discussion of differences which made the exchange particularly worthwhile. Not all best practice examples can be applied to other countries but they can offer valuable insights for the everyday work at home. All participants agreed that there was not enough time to adequately discuss all aspects. Therefore, EBZ and its partners have begun preparations for the next European Summer School in 2018. From 16 to 20 July 2018 young professionals will again have the opportunity to cross boundaries, identify similarities and learn from each other.

The European Summer School was organised by EBZ, EFL (European Federation for Living), Housing Europe (the European Federation of Public, Cooperative and Social Housing) and IWO e.V. (Housing Initiative for Eastern Europe). It was under the patronage of Gunther Adler, State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety.