

# ISHF

INTERNATIONAL  
SOCIAL HOUSING  
FESTIVAL

BARCELONA  
2023

## Established & emerging housing systems facing common challenges



## #ISHF2023 IS A RESULT OF THE DEDICATED WORK OF



We are also extremely grateful for the enthusiasm and drive of all public, cooperative, and social housing providers, fellow organisations, and delegations that organised fruitful sessions, attended the Festival and made this 4th ISHF edition a success.

### **This report has become possible thanks to:**

Diana Yordanova (Housing Europe), Pepijn Bakker (Rochdale & first ISHF organiser), Saskia Furman (PhD researcher, RE-DWELL), Andreea Nacu (Housing Europe), Alice Pittini (Housing Europe), Edit Lakatos (Housing Europe), Clara Mafé (Housing Europe), Rose Michael (Eurhonet), Barcelona City Council & ISHF2023's team of photographers.



# ISHF – celebration, protest, a movement

After the 4th edition of the International Social Housing Festival, we can confidently say that ISHF has a bright future, becoming not just a celebration of housing models that deliver, a protest to house our society in dignity but also a movement with increasingly committed social and affordable housing providers, policymakers, urbanists, architects, activists, and researchers.

On 7-9 June 2023, more than **2,100 of them came from 82 countries** to Barcelona to debate **how established and recent housing systems are facing similar challenges**. Over 200 organisations were deeply involved in the management of 30 side events, as well as 25 visits to exemplary public and cooperative housing, running 20 stands, and 6 exhibitions, all of that spread across the Catalan capital in 8 different venues. The ISHF 2023 local hosts, Barcelona City Council put together a fantastic edition.

"The most important thing is **changing the paradigm** and creating awareness about the importance of affordable housing because "social housing is key for a strong society and for municipalities to regain trust in democracy", the acting Mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau said during the Festival kick-off.

"**Nurture the network, preserve it, and co-create**," Housing Europe's President, Bent Madsen underlined at the closing ceremony. He reminded about one of the core reasons why we organise the Festival - to make different society-led ideas meet learn and start working together, and reach out to one another once we go back to our offices.

The Festival is indeed **a knowledge and solution finder**, but also a platform to **debate housing solutions with politicians**, it is a **birthplace of new partnerships**, time for **appraisal but also criticism**, and very importantly, **changing the public narrative**.

Enjoy this #ISHF2023 throwback!





# EL BARCELONA

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# WELCOME TO #ISHF2023





# The topics Housing Europe brought to the table

Housing Europe was behind the organisation of the **two-day Affordable Housing Initiative session (Tech Camp)** to discuss how technology can assist in a fair energy transition, held an inspiring event about how housing providers and social workers are **mobilising to address energy poverty**.

In Barcelona, we also continued the discussion on **the need to adapt homes in our sector to climate change** to offset the impact on the most vulnerable with a focus on the Mediterranean region and also brought attention to vast housing topics, such as **land policy, mass renovation**, and innovative action to **eradicate and prevent homelessness**.

We even held a workshop ahead of the European elections on how terms such as ‘social housing’ or ‘public housing’ are used and understood in European and international contexts to be able to **master words and communication campaigns** to make an impact.

Once again, our members from different corners of Europe - **Spain, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, Estonia, Slovenia, Ireland, and the United Kingdom** - mobilised to organise a series of events, ranging from conferences, to workshops, exhibitions, and study visits.

During all three days, we were also welcoming participants at **Housing Europe's network stand** where our Observatory and membership could share key pieces of research with the international community.







Housing Europe

Members

Partners

ISHF INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL HOUSING FESTIVAL BARCELONA 2023

# ISHF, knowledge & solution finder

## Barcelona's housing policy 5s from 2015 to 2023

A piece by our ISHF hosts, Barcelona City Council

Spain is in need not only of homes to rent but, specifically, affordable rental housing. That is to say, the country needs housing for those with insufficient income to meet market prices. As affirmed in a [recent publication by the Spanish Central Bank](#) the system is increasingly inaccessible, and the proportion of income dedicated to rent continues to grow. This is an obvious weak point in the market: supply has failed to sufficiently match growing demand. As [Housing Europe shows \(2023\)](#), with only 2.5% of social housing compared to an EU average of 9.3%, Spain still has a long way to go.

Without an extensive stock of affordable housing, it is impossible for the non-profit sector (public, public-private or third sector) to be a systemic actor in the market, [with the capacity to dampen price hikes fluctuations and provide enough affordable homes to guarantee the right to housing](#). It is the duty of all the relevant actors in the housing system to resolve this historic deficit. However, what mechanisms are needed to develop affordable housing at a sufficient scale and pace to serve the unmet demand?

Not only is the housing crisis especially thorny but housing policy is also inherently complex, slow, expensive and controversial. For a policy to be successful, it needs a broad consensus, shared goals, a great deal of collaboration, a hybrid policy that employs all available tools, and all of that along with significant, long-term funding. Before anything else, however, it needs an orientation – a direction, a mission. As [Mariana Mazzucato argues in her book Mission Economy](#), the market is a socially created institution, the product of the interactions between the public, private and third sectors.

The public sector ought to give direction to the market, shaping it to ensure that it meets public goals. In the context of housing, [the mission is to provide affordability which guarantees the universal right to housing](#).

Since 2015, Barcelona has changed the paradigm of its housing policy. [Inspired by the successful case of Vienna](#), developed over a century and in a context rather different, Barcelona is developing a new approach that seeks to provide stronger tenant protection while building affordable housing for all within the planetary boundaries. In this sense, [Barcelona has implemented for 8 years \(2015–2023\) a housing policy where the 6 principles of The Right to Housing Mission have been implemented](#). Therefore, Barcelona is developing a [market-shaping approach in the Right to Housing Plan 2016–2025](#). Alongside this new way of developing mission-oriented housing policies, Barcelona has outlined five sub-missions according to the principals suggested by [Shane Phillips in The Affordable City of the 'Three Ss': Supply, Stability, Subsidy](#), plus two more S: Social Dialogue and Sustainability added by Eduardo González de Molina.

Keep on reading more at: [bit.ly/3NN1uge](https://bit.ly/3NN1uge)





## Emerging housing systems in Southern Europe

The former UN special rapporteur on the right to adequate housing and director of the Shift movement that fights the financialisation of homes, Leilani Farha said it loud and clear at the start of day two: "Every dollar of public money should be spent with a human rights objectives – that applies to housing as well."

A human rights approach SHOULD be enough to convince governments to act but in reality, this is unfortunately not the case. A housing mission as the one proposed by Marianna Mazzucato could motivate policymakers, as it's a challenge – a carrot rather than a stick.

Municipalities allied to work on affordable housing in Italy are asking the government to set up a law framing public housing, deliver programmes on homelessness and welfare, secure stable funding, regulate short-term rental platforms, the deputy mayor of Bologna, Emily Clancy rightly pointed out.

Dimitra Siatitsa, a post-doctoral researcher from the University of Crete and the National Technical University of Athens, went on to saying that Greece has no social housing.

Financialisation as investment funds took the opportunity of falling house prices after the financial crisis to buy large parts of housing stock in cities. Today access to housing is becoming increasingly difficult for many, particularly young and migrants – but despite the hardships, there is still a lack of social movements to claim their social right to homes.

Felipe Castro Bermúdez-Coronel in charge of municipal housing in Sevilla is working on attracting private sector developers to build homes under the control of the city. In Portugal, the housing councilor of Lisbon, Filipa Roseta outlined three goals for the capital to plan for the next 10 years. The past decade was the worst in history for production of housing so today increasing supply is top priority, more specifically, mobilising 2,000 vacant homes, building a new coop not for profit housing sector.

Josep Montaner from Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya welcomed the new housing law in Spain – although one point still missing is regulation of short term rentals.



The session organised by the Generalitat de Catalunya offered a very interesting panorama of housing policies in different regions and systems. Josep Casas, Deputy General Director of Housing, Generalitat de Catalunya presented the new Territorial Housing Plan of Catalonia, hopefully to be approved next autumn. The plan will include objectives for the next 20 years. Two important points were considered: housing policies are one of the main welfare state pillars, and housing policies should be structural, not cohesion policies. The plan will set two main objectives: 15% of the main homes in high demand will have to be allocated for social policies; and then to increase the social rental stock up to 7% of the main homes. 'If we continue doing the same things, we will not achieve our objectives.'

Pablo García, Director of Housing, Land and Architecture, Basque Government, talked about the situation in the region where the main issues they are confronted with include: insufficient income within the population, the housing stock of considerable age, or the reduced rental housing stock. The signing of the Social Agreement on Housing is an important step, as it will bring long-term perspective for the policies planning in the next 15 years. As part of the short-term goals, the Basque Country established: doubling the social rental housing stock, to reach 50.000 units in 2036; refurbish around 350.000 houses (from 1.5% to 3.5% per year in 2026), and creating a strategic land reserve for social rental housing.





## Mature housing systems & the challenges ahead

Our member, **the Dutch Association of Housing Corporations (AEDES)**, and its expert in charge of EU Affairs, Robin van Leijen brought Netherlands' social housing context into the spotlight.

Although the sector went into crisis a long time ago, 2021 brought an acceleration. Historically, the tendency was to let the market regulate itself as much as possible. In 2013, the Landlord levy was introduced, to deal with the consequences of the 2008 financial crisis. Social housing providers would sell the stock to the private market in order to pay the tax.

The question regarding the Dutch current system and aspects, such as tenants' rights and housing associations has been whether local actors have to focus on getting better or focus on maintaining the system. In the 90s, the Netherlands left the market have too much space, an entire decade of neo-liberalism. Temporary contracts were introduced and this undermined tenants rights. In the meantime, state support for Buy to Let and Keep to Let has been mainly supporting the private sector.

The city has been trying to regulate but it focused on trying to regulate mostly free market players, and supporting home ownership instead of supporting the established housing associations. The Netherlands also introduced new allocation criteria for housing associations which have been far from the solution needed for a 13-year waiting list. This has resulted in a severe housing crisis in Amsterdam where youth remains at home for longer, vulnerable groups are excluded, neighbourhoods are segregated and there are huge sustainability challenges.

Pepijn Bakker, representing the Dutch social housing provider Rochdale, took the floor to talk about the practitioner's perspective. For Rochdale, the renovation part is now bigger than the new-built, which is typical for a mature organisation.

Speaking of scarcity, one important problem, he gave the example of a family of six, that could not move from a two-room apartment, due to a very long waiting list. In terms of challenges, the most serious ones are: to ensure sufficient affordable housing, how to make it sustainable and futureproof, and how to create stronger communities. "We are looking at how the national agreements can match with the challenges that we are facing," Pepijn Bakker said.

Our Secretary General, Sorcha Edwards brought to the table the European perspective. 'When it comes to housing, people are only aware of their local context'. She further reminded that households were pushed to the limits during the very recent crises caused by the pandemic. This brought the realisation that housing policy dimensions should also be in focus. For example the stay-at-home policy during the coronavirus pandemic, not everyone had a home where to stay, Sorcha stressed.

Fortunately, housing is back on the political agenda again. This can also be seen within society, as people took to the streets to voice their concerns. AEDES has taken on the mission to find a solution, a hard one as two different realities competed: the one of the sector saying that the business model will not work for much longer, and the government saying that guaranteed loans will be available. Finally, a resolution was reached in the Parliament and the National Performance Agreement was signed, a new housing minister was elected, and there has been a new Housing Agenda focusing on housing and rental rights as a common good.







In addition to the Netherlands, **Austria, and Finland** also have a long tradition in social housing. Yet, growing affordability issues and spatial segregation require our attention, as do new global challenges. How do we deal with these issues through innovative policies? How can we guarantee political support for social housing as public good despite diverging local and national political interests?

The Director of the Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA), Jarmo Linded who was also a host of the 2022 ISHF stressed that the Finnish housing system does work well thanks to the good institutional framework and strong actors, such as Housing Europe's member KOVA. The municipally-owned companies organised in KOVA are the most important providers of social housing with together private construction companies. It is, however, difficult to maintain and protect the system. One of the main challenges has come from the global trend of perceiving housing as a good target for investment. Profit-seeking investments are causing instability and to tackle the problem, demand-side subsidies in the amount of EUR2,5 billion have been used to guarantee that people can keep housing. Liberalised private rents which the government needs to pay have turned into a good deal for developers but come at a direct cost for taxpayers which in Finland is the highest in Europe per GDP.

In 2002, five people addicted to drugs burned a house down and Finland responded by creating a new service to tackle issues before they become crises... incredible! Prevention instead of the cure.

Mirka Järvinen and Sina Rasilainen from ARA – the Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland – explained how the state avoids evictions. Housing Advisors – a placeholder name because there is no English-language equivalent – are accessible to all and every tenure, everyone in Finland is entitled to receive housing advice. The aim is to prevent evictions and act as a stop gap between the resident and social services. For example, a gambling addict who may be about to lose there home can go for advice, avoid eviction and be shepherded to the relevant social services.

It's true Finland has the advantage of high salaries and excellent public social services. After all, the most common salary is €2,500 per month and the average salary is at least €3,000 per month. But here is another figure... a single eviction costs housing companies €10,600. Saving three people from eviction pays the salary of one Housing Advisor.

Speaking of EU's role, Jarmo Linden highlighted that the State Aid system could be adapted, as well as that more exchange experiences on tackling homelessness and climate change are necessary.





**In Austria**, Judith Lehner, Director of the Research Center for New Social Housing at the Wien Technical University worked on a presentation prepared together with limited housing providers. She pointed out that the big challenges are the need to satisfy diverse households, needs, and incomes, as well as the need to transform existing stock to climate goals and access to land in face of growing land prices.

On climate adaptation, Lehner says that we need to look at public space, not just the buildings and how important lighthouse projects are to show the way. "We need to go beyond mono functional housing estates. Community spaces providing extra space also accessible for other social housing providers and forming alliances with co-housing projects, foundational economy and the cultural sector are crucial," she noted.

Alexis Harris, a Housing Policy Manager, within **the Greater London Authority**, gave the audience an overview of the local context. The social rented sector decreased in the 1980'. Now, the Mayor of London has set as a priority to restart the building of affordable housing stock in all 33 areas of London. In the meantime, due to newcomers influx, the demand for housing keeps increasing. London has limited capacities of raising money by own means to allocate for housing, with most of the budget coming from the central government. Two important updates from the mandate of the current mayor are the establishment of the Building Council Homes for Londoners, launched in 2018 to kickstart council homebuilding in London; and the 'Right to Buy Back' programme launched in 2021 which allowed councils to purchase street properties and convert them into social housing.

Lastly, Frédéric Druot, the Director of Frédéric Druot Architecture from **France** made the point that by not considering what we have now, we cannot properly plan for the future. 'By not demolishing, we spend less to build more'.





A large digital screen on the right side of the stage displays event information. The screen is divided into two main sections: a left section with a photograph of a modern building hallway and a right section with a purple background and white text.

**THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING INITIATIVE**  
**TECH CAMP**  
For a socially-inclusive Renovation Wave

**OFFICIAL OPENING**  
9:00 Bent Madsen, Housing Europe  
9:10 Paul Cartuyvels, ECTP

Co-funded by the European Union

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# Affordable Housing Initiative Tech Camp

The Affordable Housing Initiative marked its presence at the International Social Housing Festival through the kick-off of the Tech Camp. First to take the word during the official opening was Bent Madsen, President of Housing Europe. He started by saying that when it comes to technology, there are so many possibilities, it is hard to know which one to use. Bent stressed that we need to build new houses, but that is only a small percentage of the solution. What is more difficult is the refurbishment, one of the biggest challenges. A stable framework should be designed around the refurbishment, to develop and implement the best solutions. Too much is being done in a conventional way. The process is not only about insulation, new technology but about how the local housing area can function. It is about combining the solutions, the need for greening, for affordable housing, the local housing area to become this participation platform for young, families, the elderly, etc. We must also look at the future needs, not just at the refurbishment process: we need social refurbishment.

Paul Cartuyvels, President of the European Construction, built environment and energy efficient building Technology Platform (ECTP), reminded the audience that in the 2010 recovery programme of the European Commission, one of the pillars was energy efficiency. This is why ECTP was created, to be a partner in Europe to promote innovative solutions. He underlined that while technical aspects are important, we must not lose sight of the policy dimension.

## DEMONSTRATING THE RENOVATION WAVE IN THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING SECTOR

At the start of the session, Martin Willemart, Policy Officer within European Commission's DG GROW, introduced the Affordable Housing Initiative (AHI). It was launched along the Renovation Wave, with the objective to support 100 lighthouse renovation districts by 2030. What is important to underline is that it goes beyond the scope of social housing, with the focus being at the neighbourhood level.

The strength of AHI shows thanks to the fact that it works on several levels. It encourages EU-level cross-sectorial partnerships; it channels the necessary resources to foster innovation and experimentation (drOp, ProLight or SUPERSHINE being a few examples); and it supports social innovation, through events such as the European Social Innovation Competition (EUSIC).

Sorcha Edwards, Housing Europe's Secretary General, saluted this type of initiative as usually the institutions tend to work in Brussels in silos. Through the European Affordable Housing Consortium (SHAPE-EU) project, Housing Europe was tasked by the EC to put together some guidelines of the initiatives that succeeded, so that others could become inspired to act too.

Three sister projects came on the stage to explain by concrete examples what AHI means. The first person to take the floor was Naia Gómez, the coordinator of the drOp project and representative of the Ermua Municipality. The main goal of the project is to develop an Integrated Renovation Methodology, that aims to transform social housing districts into inclusive smart neighbourhoods. The work of the project will be organised on three main levels: strategic, divided into the diagnosing and planning stages; design, which will focus on prioritisation and project design; and intervention, where there will be an intervention plan and assessment. To achieve this, citizens engagement will be an essential dimension.

The project has one lighthouse demonstrator in one neighbourhood of the town of Ermua in Northern Spain where the methodology will be fully tested. The two peer cities will also play an important role: Elva will support with expertise for the digitalisation process, and Matera will share its experience in maximising the potential of cultural and creative industries. By the end of the project the two cities will have replication plans to engage citizens.





# drOp

Putting the residents  
at the heart of social  
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### drOp Partners


An Affordable Housing Initiative demonstrator

Funded by the European Union.

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Momir Tabakovic, from the University of Applied Sciences Technikum Wien, presented the ProLight project. It aims to test a standardised approach in six demo sites and energy communities, which will act as incubators of technological, social, regulatory, and market solutions. ProLight will identify methodologies able to foster European lighthouse and pocket districts. Innovation clusters will be created through empirical analysis of districts in Austria, Finland, Greece, Spain, Italy, and Portugal. Lastly, at the end of the project blueprints for renovation will be provided and energy and climate-aware communities will be created. Citizens engagement will once again be a central theme.

Paola Zerilli, from the University of York, gave a brief insight on the evolution of the Super-I project: its aims is to provide a significant contribution towards generating investments and collecting data on energy efficiency refurbishment in the social housing sector. She put forward the case of the Italian pilot, comprising two social housing developments, with 251 units to be extensively renovated, with another 128 to be demolished and rebuilt. In terms of funding, the social housing provider will be responsible for covering the investment costs, collaborating with financial institutions, or using government loans.

Riccardo Coletta, from APRE, intervened in order to complement the presentation with the angle of the SUPERSHINE project. As part of its general objectives, the project will analyse the financial situation of three lighthouses situated in Denmark, Italy and Latvia; will support innovative financial solutions such as Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) or Green Public Procurement (GPP); and will provide tools to support local SMEs in redefining the process of their products and systems from the point of view of design, production, logistic and business models by adopting technologies, ultimately to address essential needs of social housing residents.

3 Barriers holding you off from district renovations and how to overcome them  
This session aimed at identifying some of the biggest challenges, together with potential solutions that work in practice and can be inspiring.

Representing VVH, the Flemish housing association, the Director Gert Eyckmanns said that renovation is too slow and too costly, and not efficient enough to meet the climate and energy targets because the approach taken is often a bit-by-bit: building-by-building or even dwelling-by-dwelling. Industrializing the renovation and using prefabricated modules could be a potential solution. It would be cheaper, quicker and would help avoid mismatches. In his view, the barriers that hold off from industrialization are as follows:

- o It is not easy to assess the state of the buildings: specific tools are necessary;
- o There is the need to know what the actual situation on the market is; and service providers need to know the demand;
- o Public procurements need to allow innovation;
- o It is necessary to find a way to involve tenants and let them express their needs.

He concluded that in order to get the industrialization process started, governments should encourage bundling demands.

Enrico Grillo, an engineer from SEQUAS, believes that poor quality design and construction, as well as the expected energy efficiency results not being provided are two main barriers. In order to overcome poor quality in renovation, a holistic approach is needed, based on the following solutions:

- o Taking environmental aspects into consideration and training SMEs to look at them and leave business-as-usual;
- o Raising awareness for tenants;
- o Sharing good practices, especially through study visits;



- o Implementing smart and collective project management;
- o Relying on digitalization, not only during renovation but also after, with a user-friendly approach for tenants;
- o Applying circularity and using sustainable materials.

From his side, Albert Terrones, the head of Housing Department from City of Mataro, argues that a mainly owner-occupied city, a strong segregation and the lack of support instruments are also considerable barriers for efficient renovation. In Mataro, even the building stock of affordable housing is mainly privately-owned. There are many subsidies to encourage renovation, however very few people apply. A solution that could work, if not for several factors:

- o Organizational reason: in multi-owner buildings, the decision-making process is difficult, especially since there are many diverse communities living together;
- o Economical reason: vulnerable communities lack investment capacities and financial credibility, so they cannot obtain loans from banks;
- o Conceptual reason: renovation is imposed, so the perspective needs to be changed to a more positive one. Also, vulnerable communities can feel that energy efficiency is a luxury, while they consider they have more pressing needs;
- o Adequacy: instruments need to be more tailored to needs (taking into consideration that not everybody is able to fill in administrative documents or cannot pay upfront while waiting for reimbursement).

## **RENOVATING AT THE DISTRICT SCALE: WHY, WHAT AND HOW?**

The session was opened by Francisco Javier Martín Ramiro, from the Ministry of Transport and Urban Agenda of Spain. He presented the point of view of the of the Spanish Presidency on the district scale and the European Regulatory Framework. With a quite intensive construction activity in Spain, the renovation works were more stable than new built. The housing stock in Spain is very difficult to maintain, as it is quite old; and most of it holds the D energy label and below.

The current ambition is to reach 300.000 of renovated units per year by 2030, but for that the process needs to be boosted, and for this, the government wants to take advantage of the Renovation Wave and Recovery and Resilience Plan. Another issue is that in Spain there is a housing stock with single owners per apartment, which renders the decision-making process very difficult in this type of environment. Reforms and investments addressed for residential areas are currently under development. The neighbourhood scale is considered to be the most important.

Andoni Hidalgo, from Euroiker, presented the Opengela One-stop-shop that aimed to spread urban regeneration in the Basque Country. This type of projects face the challenge of demographic developments. Energy dependence is a key topic, which amounts up to 93% from the overall need.

The building stock is very old, the 2nd oldest in Europe, of which a great part was built before any energy regulations were introduced. The goal is to rethink the way of doing urban regeneration, with investments being concentrated only on the building refurbishment, and not on social aspects. Through Opengela, one-stop-shops were set up to advise inhabitants on the renovation throughout the process, but also to address elements such as accessibility. They were focused on vulnerable communities who could not access bank loans.

Muris Kodžaga, representing Hilfswerk International, talked about the Social Housing pilot project (SHS) implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The country has a complicated political context. The need for a systematic solution was acute, creating the space for such a project with an aim to develop an integrated sustainable social housing model. Local authorities were aware of the scale of the issue but were not able to find solution on their own. Their interest was evident through the scale of co-funding, where they provided more than 40% of the project funds. Thus a study was conducted, which involved most local stakeholders.







Recommendations were provided to improve the legal framework, as well as a proposal for adopting a law on social housing. While at the national level there are many obstacles, at local level things are advancing faster. As part of the SHS project, some conditions were adopted, to make social housing ‘attractive’: accessibility; never compromising on the quality of the construction, so that it will easily be maintained afterwards; providing a sense of home; prioritising an integrated approach; affordability.

Paula Ferrando, from GNE Finance, and Nerea Gómez, representing ECTP, showcased the development of blueprints for replication to deliver successful lighthouse districts, as part of the [European Affordable Housing Consortium, SHAPE-EU project](#). Three blueprints were created, to guide local partnerships on how people-driven approaches during renovation, technical innovation, and planning neighbourhood transformation could and should deliver a fair change for communities. These blueprints correspond to the three main dimension of the renovation process: Project implementation, Social innovation and the Technical one.

## **USING DATA FOR IMPROVING THE ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN OUR BUILDINGS**

The first day of the Tech Camp ended with a fruitful debate on how the use of data can be integrated into the sector of social housing in order to better achieve energy efficiency.

Elissaios Sarmas, from the National Technical University of Athens, explained the way machine learning can improve the decision-making process in social housing. Most importantly, it provides a standardised way to collect and analyse data, the process being based on four pillars: performance, design, policy and fund. To implement them, algorithms and tools needed to be produced. The energy financing tool, based on machine learning, was built on the basic idea that the algorithms developed will estimate the consumption before it happens thanks to historical data. This work was developed by using the results of the [DEEP project](#).

More information is available of the [Matrycs](#) project website.

Another result of the same project was presented by Guillermo Andrés Nieto, from Veolia: the Matrycs Toolbox. Once ready, it will enable reliable and effective policymaking, as well as support the creation and exploitation of innovative services through the utilisation of a wide variety of data, for the safe and effective operation of buildings. It was designed as a user-friendly tool, which will allow the automatic calculation of the most suitable mathematical model, the most interesting independent variable(s), and the energy savings among periods.

The session ended with a panel discussion that added the perspectives of Barbara Steenbergen, from the International Union of Tenants, and of Timo Wanke, representing the Federal Association of German Housing and Real Estate Companies. The conclusion could be summarised as follows: these tools, while useful, together with the use of data, are still too complicated for the tenants, they need to be further developed; and from a technical point of view, the most important this is that data needs to be given interpretability.

## **TIME FOR RENOVATION TECH TALKS**

Beatriz from RMIT University Europe kicked off the event by reminding us of the importance of experimentation and trying new approaches in housing.

Alexis Versele from KU Leuven, who is an expert on “socio-ecological construction”, presented the work that he and his colleagues are doing on developing new building typologies, with a focus on modularity, circularity, and bio-based elements. The approach is based on using one common set of “elements”, such as windows, doors and wall panels, but which can be fit together in different ways to develop homes of different sizes and with different configurations. Alexis described this as the “Lego-isation” of construction, where common pieces can be reimaged and reconfigured again and again. The approach being developed by KU Leuven has benefits in terms of the speed of development, but also in terms of reduced environmental impact and recovery of residual value from dwellings at the end of their lifecycle.



Gaetano Bertino, from alchemia-nova in Austria, discussed the need to move away from the linear economy and towards a more circular frontier. For example, buildings account for around 35% of the resources used in the EU, such as materials. Alchemia-nova is expert in green facades and nature-based solutions, with a focus on creating sustainable water cycles. Gaetano also explained his work on creating so-called 'pop-up' buildings to meet temporary needs. While this can serve a housing function, for example for migrants or others in urgent need, it can also play a more general community or cultural role, with many good examples of vacant plots being used for pop-up venues. In areas with various types of vacancies, including lots, commercial units, or even public spaces, a pop-up building approach can be used to quickly and sustainably meet housing and needs.

Jessica from '360 Climate Change Solutions' in Spain has developed a new type of mortar, "without sand", called "Bio-EcoMatter". Given that traditional sand-based cement generates around 8% of global GHG emissions and that we will need 230 million tonnes of cement between now and 2050, this more sustainable approach is a welcome development. Rather than using sand, the new mortar is derived from agro-industrial waste, meaning it is a bio-based and circular material. Bio-EcoMatter is also lighter and cheaper than traditional mortars. When looking at the life-cycle of the new approach, it is noted to be significantly less damaging for the environment, especially from a CO2 emissions perspective. The fact that less material is required, and at a lower price point, in order to achieve the desired rendering, the new product can also provide meaningful cost savings; meaning it pays to be more sustainable.

### **AFFORDABLE HOUSING INITIATIVE TECH CAMP – TECH TALK 2 ON ENERGY EFFICIENCY**

How can we improve energy performance in buildings? With this question, Jan Buyle from Knauf Energy Solutions kicked off the Tech Talk about new energy efficiency systems in construction or renovation. The main points of improvement we should strive for are, according to him: a result-oriented market, clear ROI and the adoption of a new learning cycle based on real

measures. Occupants should have a better understanding of the impact of renovations and there should be a new business model that includes precise performance contracts, grid management etc. At Knauf Energy

Solutions, measures are taken before and after renovation, but they are also developing and training an algorithm to learn about house behaviour.

### **Tech Talk 3: On industrialised approaches**

Luis Ignacio Suarez, from IDONIAL Technology Center, presented the AM-PLATFORM, standing for Additive Manufacturing, has as a goal to foster a quick market uptake, and it is free for everyone who wants to be present on it. The use of the AM technology is trying to reduce material waste. It can produce affordable house in a fast and easy way. It offers, among other advantages, the freedom to use more forms. However, even though the available technologies are good, they need to be fitted in the market, and we have to establish roadmaps for that. In terms of lessons learned, we can say that there is no solution that can fit all sectors. Production is not just a single step, the complete chain needs to be considered, as well as the integration process.

Oksana Talisainen, a representative from the Mustamäe District, in Tallinn, showcased the pilot project that was implemented there, consisting of building the communist block with prefabricated concrete panels. She explained that in the beginning, they were built with a shelf life of 25 years, with the expectations that afterwards there will be enough available resources for them to be demolished and rebuilt. Fast forward to today, the current needs and conditions, especially those connected to the weather and climate, call for: full modular renovation, that can also include for example the installation elevators in 5 storey buildings. Traditional renovation can be time consuming, as workers can work on the exterior façade only from two to four months a year.







Paul Dufraisse talked about the EnergieSprong programme and the Giga Regio Factory project. The energiesprong movement started five years ago. It was important to align all stakeholders' interests so that a net zero market segment could emerge, and adjust it to national contexts. Through this process, the Netherlands have reduced the renovation costs by 50% in 10 years. As the experimentation phase should be over, we need to transition to the scaling up phase. The new Giga Regio Factory project has precisely the goal to facilitate this work by helping demand and supply actors to scale up.

William Nelissen presented the Sociale Energy Sprong. Cordium manages a low income housing programme in Hasselt, Belgium. The goal is to always keep the social angle in mind, as the tenants are the most valuable asset of the organisation. In the case of Sociale Energy Sprong, they did not start from scratch, and inspiration was taken from the projects in the Netherlands. A lot of preparation is needed: 3-d scanning, BIM modelling, and co-creation with all contractors and stakeholders, being some of the steps that need to be included. For example, the meetings and consultations with the tenants started a year before the works. They were told about all the stages, what will happen when and how. The follow-up process is still ongoing, even a year after the works were done. Even though it was a challenging process at times, it demonstrated that the fast pace of the works allowed to avoid numerous problems at neighbourhood level.

#### Tech Talk 4: On digitisation in affordable, adaptable and purpose-driven manner

This very last session of the Tech Camp focused on how digitization intends to transform the existing and new buildings into an active element rather than passive, enabling it to adapt to the dynamic environment and to occupants' requirements. This will optimize the energy consumption and give provision of assessment of the live energy performance of a building.

Ian Pyburn, from IES R&D Ltd, a software company offering building analysis, spoke about what elements should be taken into account when needing to decide between retrofit or demolition. For example, while it may seem it is better retrofit, this could prevent the achievement of the highest efficiency. Digital systems need to be put in place to ensure the measuring of the carbon impact of the works. He explained how implementing a digital twin can allow for a physics enabled simulation and real and virtual sensor data.

Elena Conte took the floor to present the NEMESIS project, developed through the METABUILDING project. The main objective was to address the following needs: address the Smart Readiness Indicator; extract geographical information, but also weather data, to plan and suggests optimal technologies for the building to improve energy consumption and behaviour; and to develop the integration of BEM Server. Simply put, the goal was to provide a digital platform to address and reduce the energy consumption but also to plan the most optimal investment. To achieve this, a set of three tools were created: a Smart Readiness Indicator Calculation Module, an Investment Planning one, and a BMS Extension.

Gregory Clare introduced the audience to the Switchee platform. The question that led the presentation was: How can data help us identify households at risk if fuel poverty? He argued that we need to start using data in order to help tenants, because we cannot see what issues people face in their homes. A very compelling example was the one of an elderly lady living in the United Kingdom, who only turned on heating on Christmas day in December. The purpose would be to monitor the homes, not the people, as ultimately, the housing stock itself will degrade too overtime.



# Mass renovation of affordable housing: industrial and social innovations

**RE-DWELL and Housing Europe** co-organised a seminar to debate whether social policies are aligned with environmental policies and **whether the environmental framework of housing is socially-just**, or it brings tenants further burdens. Some of the key messages that we took away were that we should not just retrofit but renovate in mass, industrialise the renovation process, avoid creating segregation, deploy organisational transformations to allow social innovation to emerge and ensure socially just quality of life improvements.

Paul Dufraisse from GREENFLEX, France stated that we need to scale up the net-zero roll-out, industrialise off-site solutions to minimise nuisance, increase attractiveness by including architects and have a scaleable market to remain affordable. Scaling up now needs to grow from thousands to millions.

Alex Fernandez, a PhD researcher also part of the RE-DWELL programme pointed out that the main issue that he observes with ESG finance is the difficulty to define and set clear boundaries and indicators of environmental, social, and governance finance.

Social housing providers draw finance from government loans and grants as well as capital market funding. "There is still a need for public funding if we still want social housing to be built at scale," Alex said.

Becky Ritchie from Clarion Retrofit, the largest social housing organisation in the UK with 125,000 social homes covering a distance from Plymouth in the south of England, to York in the North also has a resident-focused charitable arm called 'Clarion Futures'. The UK has 4.4 million homes to retrofit and its SHDF – Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund – is government funding for retrofits based on the "worst first, fabric first, no regrets" approach.

Clarion has funded 100 jobs training in retrofit awareness and created a 12 Stage Roadmap for Retrofit. Becky said: "It is not just about carbon, but a just and fair transition for our residents".

Going back to Spain, Nina Turull Puig from Sostre Civic, the housing cooperative promoting the "Right to Use: no rent no purchase" provide emotional and financial support for members. To them, we must define the way a group of people wants to live, then look for funding – support comes from the municipality and, at times, the private market.

Retrofit Project 'Clau Mestre' – an old teachers' block. In Spain, in the past, work came with housing e.g. teachers housing. Today, much of this housing stands empty. Clau Mestre is a Sostra Civic retrofitted social housing block where groups of residents organised themselves, went from planning meetings to painting, started sharing energy between residents, use as less materials as possible, benefit from biomass energy and PV panels, but also rely on shared mobility network.

Housing Europe's Policy Director, Julien Dijol stressed that imperatives are urgent and essential, not just short term but long term. **We are now in economic, climate, biodiversity, and social imperative**, he said, and added that we must balance where we put the money. **"We cannot afford to put all the money into one imperative,"** Julien said.

Today, decarbonisation is happening and social housing right now is more energy, water, and resource-efficient than in other parts of the housing sector. The challenges ahead are to take into consideration the behavioural effect to reduce the rebound effect and quality of the works and supply chain. Industrialisation is also a good solution to impact these issues. At the same time, CO2 reduction is a co-benefit of the renovation for people. Quality of life, summer comfort, vegetation, and new businesses are the main benefits.



# Climate justice in the Mediterranean

Southern Europe shares key features in terms of climate hazards, exposure, and vulnerabilities that make it particularly sensitive to climate change. Identifying these vulnerabilities and adequate adaptation pathways can help to facilitate the exchange of resilience knowledge and experience. This **Housing Europe session** aimed at showing **how can we adapt public and social housing in Spain, Portugal and Greece to a changing hotter and hotter Mediterranean climate.**

Last year (2022) was the hottest summer ever recorded. October 2022 was the warmest ever recorded and we have seen a heat wave in April. Global warming disproportionately hits this part of the world and the Mediterranean is heating up much faster than elsewhere. Cities in the Mediterranean are in the big majority (but also with some important exceptions) unprepared for the heat, as they were planned in the fossil-fueled era. The unlimited access to fossil fuel and disregard for the effect of global warming has resulted in cities being built regardless of the local circumstances. The result is that vulnerable people in particular are getting affected by the heat, putting them on an unequal footing. Having access to good housing usually means the ability to afford air conditioning and live in green areas. On the opposite, those who are unable to live in decent homes, especially the elderly, young children, and fetuses, suffer from the heat. Heat has been exaggerating multiple symptoms, not just physical, but mental problems as well. In a broader sense, low-income groups suffer have been suffering from energy poverty and having a hard time cooling their homes down, which then results in bad night rest and fatigue, and less productivity.

The first appointed Global Chief Heat Officer at UN-HABITAT, Eleni Myrvilli sees three solutions for our problems that we need to work on simultaneously. To her, first we need to measure the problem better, to enable us to develop better insight and better policies. Second, key players should provide short-time solutions, for instance, create public (indoor) spaces that people can move to if they experience heat problems at home.

And finally, we must rethink how we build our cities. For instance, by no longer using impermeable building materials like asphalt, glass, and metal and changing to permeable ones, such as clay, wood which might mean using older techniques and local materials. 'We can do it,' Myrvilli said.

Carles Oliver Barceló, who is an architect at the Institut Balear de l'Habitatge (IBAVI) showed a wide range of projects and materials, including stone, clay, wood, rammed earth blocks, demolition materials, and 'posidonia oceanica' that can help housing providers in this challenge. To him, architects should change their architectural language, moving from the language of the international modernist style –which means working with concrete, glass, and steel, all materials made with fossil energy – to the many architectural local styles in the world.







# INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL HOUSING FESTIVAL



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#ISHF2023

Tools for grassroots activities

Tools for grassroots activities

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## Working formulas and question marks for pathways out of energy poverty

In 3 years social housing providers, social workers, municipalities, and researchers got training and trained 2,000 people all across Europe to fight energy poverty. We are bearing the fruits of this commitment thanks to our EU-funded project, POWERPOOR but also, trust, open communication, persistence, scale-up. Housing Europe wearing also the hat of the POWERPOOR project, together with Barcelona's Energy Agency and the Flemish social housing initiative, ASTER shared what measures and tools have been successfully supporting energy-poor citizens.

To set the context, Housing Europe's Research Director, Alice Pittini presented a sneak peek of our 2023 "State of Housing in Europe" report with information from 22 social and affordable housing providers, coming from 17 countries. Having a strong focus on energy, this edition has shown that the sector is a leader in the energy transition, through renovations (compared to privately owned homes). Austria's social housing sector for instance has renovated 96% of all its pre-1980 building stock. In other countries, however, challenges such as the unsustainable costs for construction and renovation have been a serious barrier. In Germany, renovation projects have been cut by 1/4 and new construction by 1/3, causing a risk of backlogs due to the increase in the cost of living which has been hitting low-income households the hardest.

Nevertheless, many companies decided not to increase the rent, even if legally they were allowed to; they worked with the residents; offered energy coaching or helped them to access available funding.

Sven van Alst, a Director of ASTER explained that the company's action to offer solidarity-based and sustainable energy for social housing in Flanders is of crucial importance as more than 50% of the social housing tenants in the region live in energy poverty. "We cannot say for sure what will be the extent of the consequences of the energy crisis, we needed this crisis for people to become aware of the seriousness of the situation and become motivated to find solutions," Sven said. He then explained how ASTER was created in 2020 as a cooperative company, bringing together 60% of the social housing companies (90% of the housing stock), with private funding and no subsidies. Their ambition was simply to activate the social potential of social housing sector in Flanders. The generated energy generated from the solar panels installed on the social housing stock is sold to the tenants, at a price 28-34% cheaper than the market. So far, 4 000 PV-installations, 50 000 panels have been installed and to him, the only way of getting the message across is through repetition, talking to the people, keeping things simple and knowing that tenants know best what their needs are.

Eleni Kanellou, a PhD researcher at National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) and a coordinator of the Horizon POWERPPOR project explained that in three years, Housing Europe and partners have certified 1100 energy supporters and mentors who can help households in need. Our Estonian member, Anu Sarent from EKYL has established an energy poverty alleviation office where apartment associations can seek help. "You have to know your target group and have a physical presence. To make sure that these solutions are long-lasting, we started thinking about sustaining the tools from the very start." The Estonian system of grants, loans and guarantees for housing associations has been a true power house but also offering a solid legal support framework to citizens has been highly valuable. Finally, and very importantly, the power of example has proved important once again as citizens are more willing to follow after seeing a best practice.



Sergi Delgado from Barcelona Energy Agency pointed out that we need to prioritise refurbishment even if it is a heavy goal. Local actors have been using the Next Generation EU fund to be able to do this in communities that normally do not have the resource or cannot access them.

PhD researcher Tijn Croon has spent several months with large social housing companies and within the Housing Europe team to study what is the sector doing to tackle energy poverty. Looking ahead of the hot summer which impact households in southern countries, Tijn said that the measures taken during winter could also work for summer conditions and that the principle of warm hubs (where people can find shelter and comfort) could be transformed and adapted into 'cool hubs'. However, affordable refurbishment remains one of the most important factors.

Once again, Eleni Kanellou highlighted that the POWERPOOR toolkit which helps to target households, act on the problem, and fund measures has made it easier for local authorities to help citizens.

We welcomed six local heroes, the most motivated energy supporters and mentors who have been helping households in Bulgaria, Croatia, Spain, Portugal, Estonia, and Latvia.

Speaking of investment in smart energy efficiency in social housing, our EU-funded project SUPER-i presented some of the key tools and findings, including a methodology to score the potential positive impact of different practical measures (insulation, replacement of windows, inclusion of renewables) therefore allowing social housing companies to chose the best combination given the local context. Cristina Davi from ATER Trieste highlighted the benefits of the Italian pilot, including tools to tackle energy poverty and overall poverty, environmental benefits and increased quality of life, as well as the creation of services for residents and the local community.

## Smart energy efficiency investments in the sector

Speaking of investment in smart energy efficiency in social housing, our EU-funded project SUPER-i presented some of the key tools and findings, including a methodology to score the potential positive impact of different practical measures (insulation, replacement of windows, inclusion of renewables) therefore allowing social housing companies to chose the best combination given the local context. Cristina Davi from ATER Trieste highlighted the benefits of the Italian pilot, including tools to tackle energy poverty and overall poverty, environmental benefits and increased quality of life, as well as the creation of services for residents and the local community.



## Engaging residents to achieve sustainability goals

How do we better involve residents in building sustainable neighbourhoods? We heard about a number of projects which place resident engagement at the heart of the retrofitting process. Caroline Cheng, SINTEF presented the SMILE methodology developed through the ARV project Housing Europe is part of. Scope, Map, Implement, Learn, and Enhance are the key five factors for success according to their approach. The process involves analysing the key actors involved to focus in on specific needs. Through in-depth understanding of target groups, we can better craft messages from the tenant's perspective.

"Sometimes things don't happen as you expect. The human factor must be considered at all stages of the process." Marta Nicolau Prohens, Palma City Council introduced strategies for creating an inclusive energy transition process and carrying out large-scale retrofitting. A major challenge to address was a feeling of distrust in institutions. It was key to develop an approachable presence within the neighbourhood and to diversify the communication of information.



## ISHF talk on participation, policy, retrofit and engagement

Montserrat Pareja, a housing researcher from the University of Barcelona led one of the cutting-edge academic research presentations on social housing – from tenants' participation, to policy, retrofit, and engagement.

Javier Gil and Lorenzo Vidal from UNED touched upon rent caps, saying that the arguments against them in Spain are that working-class people worked hard to



afford their multiple properties and governments can't reduce their hard-earned income by capping rents. Hard data based in Barcelona, however, tells a different story. Landlords are the richest members of society and tenants are the poorest. Reducing rent by 20% will still keep landlords the richest members of society. "Landlords would remain the highest earners even if they stopped receiving rental income," UNED said.





Moving to the Belgian university, KU Leuven, Viviana d'Auria and Katya van den Broeck added we need to consider engaging tenants during the entire process of social housing retrofit. From pre-design to the afterlife of retrofit, we should always ask whether the environment now socially inclusive and if there is still a social housing stigma. This research project is right at conception, but a good foundation has been laid regarding **the role of the tenant in retrofit**.

A few options have been laid out:

Option 1: the tenant as diagnostic – it helps diagnose the issue and informs architectural designs.

Option 2: the tenant as self-acting – tenants renovate themselves, however, this poses a problem to 'where does responsibility lie if something goes wrong.'

Option 3: the tenant as the expert

Some of the lessons learnt from KU Leuven were that the role of a collective housing assistant should be introduced and that the added value of a phased process is also important.

Marta Domènech from Universitat Politècnica De Catalunya, Barcelona Tech (UPC) brought up another interesting topic on how they are re-habiting the rooftop of Ciutat Vella.

An architectural investigation into the participation of tenants, funded by the local municipality in La Ribera Santa Caterina found that what people want is SHADE. A number of pavilions were then designed, self-built with the residents. Danielle Bishop, also from the University of Barcelona brought up how the lack of affordable housing is causing stress in the city. He reported that in Catalunya, there was a 60% increase in rent between 2015–2020 which has been the second highest hike in Spain overall.

# Co-creating housing policies with young people

Young adults in Europe (15–29 years) face housing market disadvantages due to a gap between existing policies and their lived experiences. Based on examples from the Netherlands, Spain (UPLIFT project), Wales (United Welsh/Tai Ffres), and Finland (NAL), this gap can be bridged by co-creating housing policies and services with young people, rather than for young people.

"Young people's housing needs must be advocated for by young people themselves," Martina Gentili, Delft University of Technology gave a clear message that we cannot create housing policies targeted to young people without hearing from young adults themselves. What issues are they facing and what solutions would young adults like to see? The feedback process between young people and policymakers is crucial."

The most important change we want to make with the Uplift project is to change the mindset of policymakers so that they understand how important co-creation is.

"In the UK, young people are stigmatised for being young." Amanda Oliver, Tai Ffres / United Welsh Housing Association, gave concrete examples from Wales. This included the coalition End Youth Homelessness Wales which aimed to create a shift to involve young people in housing policy at the homelessness prevention stage. Young people have opportunities to give input to governmental initiatives and are trained in research techniques.





# Mapping the battle for the right to housing

BGD



BLN



BCN



How to use mapping in advocating for more affordability and better protection of tenants? This question was at the center of the ISHF side event 'Mobilizing alternatives by and for people through mapping and maps', which was prepared by participants of the project [Critical Mapping for Municipalist Mobilization](#). Researchers and activists from Belgrade, Berlin, and Barcelona introduced the housing challenge in their cities and how they try to change the status quo by using interactive maps.

Jovanna Timotijvic introduced the case of Belgrade, which moved from a collective and public approach to housing to an individual and market-driven one by a liberal-oriented public administration. Her group developed a tool to be used by citizens which shows whether apartments suit them space-wise and price-wise. An overview map shows how badly the apartments suit the needs and the financial situation of tenants.

Julian Zwicker from Berlin described the increasing rent levels in his city. His group advocated for private, market-driven parties to sell their stock to non-profit actors. A tool to be used by citizens maps the desire to change landlord by the tenants.

Finally, Irene Escorihuela Blasco and Lorenzo Vidal introduced the situation in Barcelona. Less than 2% of total stock is public housing. Resulting in an average rent value of 1077 euro, while the minimum wage is 1080 euro. This makes that between 2012 and 2021 22.130 households were evicted, on average 10 per day. The group developed a tool to map evictions in the city, the reason for evictions, and details about the landlord that is evicting.

Mapping, it turns out is a powerful tool to advocate the status quo in cities, to put the right to housing back on the agenda. As one of the speakers noted 'an image says more than a thousand words'.

[Check out the project website](#) for more information.



# Good urban planning paves the way for sustainability

The building process for social housing needs to be faster with less red tape: this is the fundamental key to protect social housing through urban planning.” Laia Grau from Barcelona City Council pointed out and explained the challenges faced in the city, where social housing represents just 2% of the housing stock. In a city with very little land available, we need to focus on transformations on a plot-by-plot basis, as well as regulating the use of land for tourist use.

On a metropolitan level, Mireia Peris Ferrando, AMB presented the ‘master plan’ to retrofit existing buildings and “regenerate the fabric of the city.” As existing buildings are often old and lack energy efficiency, the focus is on sustainable, affordable homes. It is crucial to also think about proximity to basic services. As a compact city, Barcelona has a good foundation but there is still a lot to be done, explained [Guillem Costa Calsamiglia](#), Col·legi D'arquitectes De Catalunya.

Outside of Barcelona, planning has aimed to rediscover the idea of the neighbourhood, developing community and green spaces. “As most of the land in Catalonia is in private use, we also have to ask: how can the community benefit from the increase in the price of land?,” [Maria Sisternas Tusell](#), Institut Català del Sòl noted.





# Co-op housing for environmental and social sustainability

Guido Schwarzendahl representing German cooperatives reminded about the global scale of the cooperative housing sector, which in practice covers many types of housing and living arrangements. CASAE for instance showcased their work as cooperative social housing in Italy, including retrofitting and reusing existing public buildings, and converting them for use as cooperative housing. Once CASAE agrees with the owner of the building to develop a new housing project, they then put out a call for future residents.

Sostre Civic, the award-winning co-operative housing body from Catalonia and the Balearic Islands, provided an overview of their new approach to social cooperative housing. They are growing quickly, with 140 dwellings already completed and 300 new units in the pipeline. The organisation has achieved this by mixing new-built projects with public lease/renovation projects. Their projects cover the housing needs of many types of households, including specific projects for older people, and emergency accommodation.

The TULE initiative discussed how co-housing can be used to tackle climate sustainability issues. This is via collective decision-making and the pooling of resources and efforts to scale up sustainable actions.


The Austrian Federation of Limited-Profit Housing Associations (GBV) demonstrated that, despite having a high level of good quality social housing, the Austrian state invests less in Housing (capital investment & income top-ups) versus other developed nations. This is because of the strength of the system, where money is kept in the system and reinvested. This includes co-ops, which make up a significant number of social dwellings in Austria.

Overall, the key messages from the session are that the cooperative housing sector is diverse, in its approaches, but that it is at all times about cooperation

and bringing people together to find collective solutions. In doing so, they can deliver more favorable outcomes for their residents – in terms of affordability, adaptability, inclusion, and environmental and social sustainability.



Our Italian member, Legacoop Abitanti has been exploring and experimenting with new paths to develop and promote innovation in the housing services chain. During its event RECOOP UP!, Italian cooperatives reflected on the different aspects of social inclusion, broadening the perspective to what it means to live in an equitable way.

 Watch their impactful video at [bit.ly/3CS4FNw](https://bit.ly/3CS4FNw)





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**Casa Bloc, Rehabilitació d'una Idea**  
 documentary preview & film forum



**CASA BLOC**  
 REHABILITACIÓ D'UNA IDEA



Sorcha Edwards  
Secretary General  
Housing Europe



Maria Sisternas  
Director  
HABITAT



Gerard Capó  
Director  
HABITAT



Àngels Guileras  
Director  
ABD



Natalia Martínez  
Strategic Alliance & Communication  
Fundació Habitat3

ISHF INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL HOUSING FESTIVAL BARCELONA 2023






## CASA BLOC: rehabilitation of an idea

Habitat 3 set the beginning of ISHF2023 with the story of the emblematic Casa Bloc, built 90 years ago with the New European Bauhaus principles in mind and recently renovated to fight housing exclusion. The bloc was designed during the second republic by the Catalan architecture group GATCPAC as social housing to home and restore dignity to people with learning difficulties, homeless, and at risk of vulnerability. Halted during the Civil War, when the project restarted it was given to police and military, as a gift for their service. Eventually, it housed widows in the 1940s, and all (but one) of the original duplex staircases were removed by the military, changing the apartment layouts. Now, it is **reviving again for good, showing what people need to live in dignity.**

Today's Casa Bloc is a roof (and a lot more) to 17 households that were previously homeless, living in inappropriate conditions, victims of domestic violence, or at the edge of eviction. The landmark project also won World Habitat award back in 2019. This is also why our Secretary General, **Sorcha Edwards stressed the importance of films and stories which enable us to "visualise what is possible"** to create secure, affordable homes by renovating empty homes. Casa Bloc now stands as a beacon of social inclusion, with one-bed and two-bed apartments for people at risk of social exclusion, with furniture, balconies, and committed support team aiding the transition.

The movie set the tone of what we were going to discuss at ISHF – what people's needs are to live a decent life, as well as the importance to keep focus on societal needs and long-term partnerships for affordability.

## Inspirational women in La Llabor homeless facility

All doors of the apartments in La Llabor facility for homeless women have images of strong, inspirational women on them. The women, transgender and non-binary people that live in the facility choose the image when they arrive. Our guide Martha\* (not her real name), who has lived in the facility for half a year, chose French writer and feminist Olympe de Gouges, only because she liked the hat that Olympe is wearing in the picture.

This is just one of the intriguing facts that we learned during our site visit to La Llabor homeless facility up in the hills, overlooking Barcelona. Martha has no permit to be in Spain. After arriving she became homeless, lived in a mixed facility elsewhere in the city, and finally moved to La Llabor. Now she lives among about 40 other women in the facility.

La Llabor is the only 100% female facility in Barcelona. The social workers help women to recover from the specific violence that women experience while being homeless. Step by step the women learn to live a 'normal' life of cooking, doing laundry, gardening, and being part of the local community. First, they live in groups and share a toilet and bathroom. Later they live more independently and leave the facility for work in the city. Apart from the great place – the quiet atmosphere of the building, surrounded by a vegetable garden, distant from the busy city center – we enjoyed the firmness of the social workers, the structured daily routine, and the friendly approach. It felt like women were truly seen as real persons again and that they were building a new future together.







# The cardboard factory, Fàbrica de cartró by Incasòl

The old cardboard factory – Fàbrica de cartró – overlooks the river Besos on one side, and the city on the other. Close to the now-closed thermal power station that remains an emblem of Badalona, Fabrica Carto was active between 1919–2008. Incasòl, the Catalan Land Institute, and public owners of Fàbrica de cartró, are now investigating the potential retrofit, rehabilitació, and reuse of the now derelict building.

The original permeated and louvered brick façade was designed to let the air from the river cross ventilate and dry the cardboard hanging from wooden structures that hover above the head (or at eye level for people less tiny than I am) much like a suspended ceiling.

The aim is to create a cohesive environment with the River Besos and enhance the local identity by developing Fàbrica de cartró into mixed-tenure housing with sustainability at the centre. Social housing and economic needs mean Fabrica Carto is a great opportunity to generate new social housing, but it just hasn't happened yet.

A new plan is being explored combining two principles: Urban hybridisation – mixed-use and CREHAB – live and work. The vital agenda is to consider "the social activation beyond the physical renovation of the area because we live in a global, social crisis".

Desires include: refabricated systems to reduce time, cost, and waste; renewable energies; a new public space including a link to the river; an increase of dwellings from 120 to 150; common spaces for added social value.

Structural and social analyses – including the participation of the local community – are currently underway to determine the architectural, social, and historical heritage value of Fàbrica de cartró

A combination of tenure will exist here, under three "plots".

1. affordable rental housing
2. space on the ground floor given to cooperatives for communal spaces and social rental housing
3. private ownership.

Incasòl is exploring a public-private-partnership, where Incasòl owns the land and leases it to the private or third sector for 75 years. After 75 years, it can be re-leased or someone else can take over. But whoever takes the lease will have to guarantee minimum levels of sustainability – a policy being trialed by Incasól around Catalonia.

The refurbishment will be a long journey.

The structure needs improving to hold more storeys, the basement needs reinforcement. But the space is ethereal and the façade is beautiful; it could always be removed and reused – an idea already under investigation.

Who will win? Retrofit, circularity, or demolition? We'll have to wait and see.







# The epic story of La Mina

Right from the beginning of the ISHF site visit 'La Mina' we feel that there is tension in the neighbourhood. Our guide is a project coordinator of a big urban renewal project in the area. He had rather received us in the morning, as he explains, there would be less people in the streets and it would be safer for us to walk in between the big concrete apartment buildings in the neighborhood. Now, the tour is in the evening, we are at the main road perpendicular to the buildings and we don't stop taking pictures.

We pass by gigantic 11-floor flats and fully paved urban spaces in between. Boys are hanging around, we hear fireworks in the back, homeless men search for food in garbage bins, and there is a sound of Christian worship, coming from a garage box. Expensive cars with loud music are passing by and a man is holding a birdcage watching us as we walk by.

## Epic history

Only at the other end of the area, the guide takes a breath and continues the story, which is rather epic. La Mina was built in the 70s' as a final project of a slum clearance programme. Until the 60s', there were many slums in Barcelona and of the most visible ones was the Somorrostro slum, right at the shore (currently the Olympic village and Olympic harbour). It was in the 60s' that dictator Franco ordered to clean the slum and relocate the families. The estates in La Mina were built to relocate the last (and regarded as most difficult) slum dwellers.

La Mina, back then was located in the outskirts of the city, beyond the border of the municipality. The biggest buildings are 11-storey high concrete slabs, containing big apartments (62 m<sup>2</sup> usable space, 85 m<sup>2</sup> total). They were publicly funded. After paying a deposit, and after paying rent for 24 years, the dwellers became owners. Right now the apartments are owned by a wide variety of home-owners (both residents and landlords), which makes any regeneration project very difficult.

Right from the start, all ingredients to stir social problems were present: new inhabitants of La Mina had no experience of living in apartment flats, moreover they were unfamiliar with the area and the public institutions. And finally, there was little help because the municipality that they moved to, Sant Adria de Besos was very small and poor. Up until today, La Mina is the poorest area of the city. It is known for drug dealing, violence and extreme poverty, and illiteracy unemployment rates are among the highest.

## Urban regeneration plan

The municipalities of Sant Adria de Besos and Barcelona, the metropolitan government and the region of Catalonia teamed up in a consortium to improve the neighbourhood. A plan was designed to open up the area to the city by adding a tram line, to partly demolish the massive apartment blocks, to create a new 'rambla' with sea view and finally to build new projects along this main road, both to relocate residents and to add market rental apartments.

The biggest challenge of the project was relocating the tenants and home-owners of the old buildings. The consortium worked on the right financial conditions to move. The owners (whether they were resident or landlord) would receive the appraised value for their apartments in the old building. If needed the consortium would provide additional loans. This would enable them to buy a similar apartment in a new building along the new main road at zero costs, only having to cover expenses in case they wanted to move to a larger flat. Social tenants were enabled to move from the old to the new without rent increase.

## Disaster

In 2012, just after the consortium had realised its first apartments for relocation of tenants, the project got hit by the global financial crisis in a terrific way. The landlords could not obtain funding to invest in affordable rental projects and without landlords it was impossible for tenants to move from the old buildings to the new ones. So, the apartments remained vacant and finally were squatted.



Up until today, the apartments are occupied, leaving the consortium with a financial construction that has proven to be very vulnerable to financial crises, with new apartment buildings that bear traces of being squatted for 10 years, and last but not least, with very disappointed local residents who were promised better living circumstances but who have to remain in the old buildings.

While walking along the Rambla, the guide points us the traces of squatting. External doors to technical spaces were damaged in order to illegally connect to water, electricity, and even gas supply. We see poorly maintained facades and garbage on the balconies. 'We need to be very careful with these people, as they are families and should not be evicted without an alternative home. It appears that we need to relocate even more people now,' he says.

## Future

Recovering this neighbourhood was a clear step forward to improve the situation of the area where social and urban development issues were affecting the inhabitants. Upon the intervention of Incasòl some of the issues were relieved and the inhabitants found an improvement in their quality of life.

Despite all problems, the consortium keeps on working. Social workers try to help the dwellers as much as they can. Vacant plots along the Rambla are waiting for new development giving hope that the area could change for the better. The presence of a newly installed police station and of the company acting as a reference point for residents concerned with the urban renewal plan also contribute to the smoother running of the project. Last but not least, the positive change brought about by the new Rambla axis is both practical and symbolic: what was before a 'dead end' place cut out from the city has been opened up and connected – breaking the sense of isolation and claustrophobia which must have been adding to the (undeniably huge) social problems in the past.

## Social housing in East Asia

Asian housing professionals have a special relationship with the ISHF, as they were part of the very first ISHF in Amsterdam and look back on a long lasting and fruitful collaboration with Amsterdam practitioners. Great to find out that Yi Ling Chen, associate professor at Wyoming University, put together a program of housing specialists working in Taipei, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Seoul, giving updates on affordability and provision of affordable housing.

The first presenter, Kuo-Chung Wei, introduced us in the 'miracle of Taipei', as Chen coined, meaning that the city has build a significant stock of now 2% of the total stock and growing to 5% in the nearby future. A robust model was created to finance, construct and operate social housing. This enabled developers to create more diverse projects, breaking with the monotonous stereotypical image of social housing, including social services in the buildings and encouraging neighbors to care for each other.

Geert Kornatowski of Kyushu University in Japan explained the challenges in Japan, which are totally different. Japan faces a incredibly fast ageing population. Between 10% and 20% of the houses in Japanese cities are abandoned, in particular in the inner city. There are no non-profit social housing providers. Actually 'social housing' barely exists. Vulnerable Japanese groups that need support in housing receive subsidy from the government. Compared to other Asian countries, this subsidy is relatively high. This type of voucher system enables landlord to refurbish run down areas and provide social housing.

Panelists from Hong Kong introduced us to the challenge in their city. Accessibility to social housing is getting more difficult over the years. In 10 years time, the minimum waiting time has risen from 1 to 6 years. To tackle the shortage of housing, the current administration plans to build 30.000 temporary flats, next to planning more permanent projects that will be completed in 5 years time.



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## ISHF, a platform to debate solutions with politicians

### Ada Colau: ‘Social housing is key to regain trust in democracy’

‘Social Housing is key for a strong society and for municipalities to regain trust in democracy’ says the acting mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau at the opening event of ISHF. She is crystal clear that instead of legitimising speculation of housing as an asset, public administrations should set affordable housing in the center of society. Not to manage the problems of vulnerable people, but because housing is a basic right, a necessity to live to develop yourself and to contribute to society.

Therefore, since she came into power as mayor of Barcelona, her administration has worked out policies to prevent – or delay – evictions, to regulate rents of small private landlords, and to build new social housing, at least 40% in new urban development. Even though the difficulty of changing a system, it worked out. Social housing grew from 7,500 units eight years ago, to 11,500 now and will grow to 14,000, now the biggest share of social housing in any Spanish city which is a great result.

The most important thing is changing the paradigm and creating awareness about the importance of affordable housing.

## MEP Kim Van Sparrentak, the Greens

One of the sector's strongest allies, Dutch Member of the European Parliament, Kim Van Sparrentak travelled to Barcelona to explain how she convinced her colleagues to vote on the report "Access to decent and affordable housing for all". She has put a very strong emphasis on housing as a human right, and have always been stressing that the housing crisis is impacting more cities than we might think, or as she usually says: "from Warsaw to Athens, Dublin to Lisbon, more and more people can't afford a home...".



## Irish housing minister's second time at ISHF

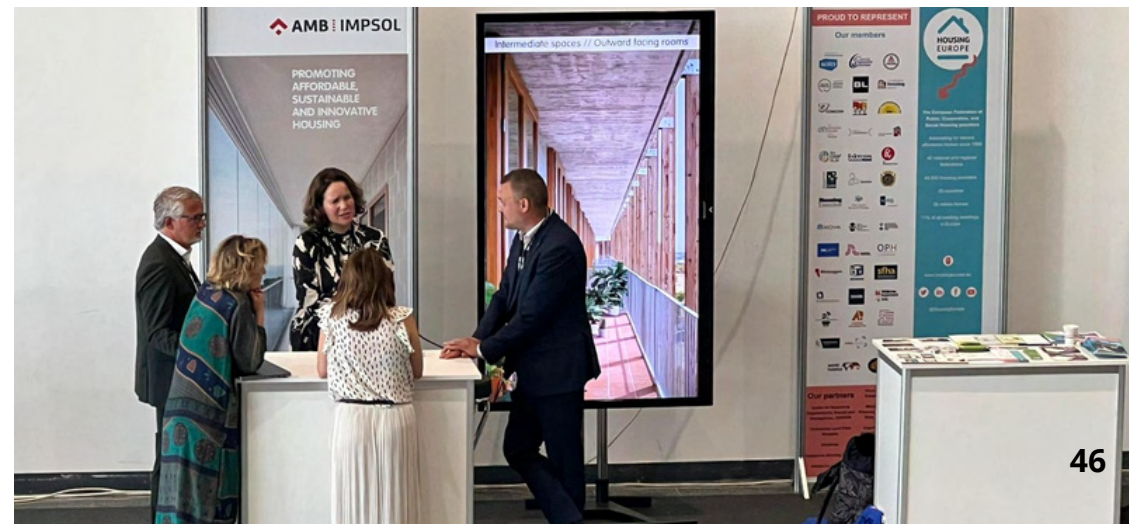
Ireland's Housing Minister, Darragh O'Brien said: "Being in the wealthy part of the world, we should be able to provide homes for our people, we should not see high levels of homelessness and that drives us every day. I am absolutely committed to doing that."



## Meeting with Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU

Housing Europe's stand was also a fantastic spot to organise meetings.

This is where our President, Secretary General, and Policy Director, together with our Dutch member met a delegation from the upcoming Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU.







## More city voices

Municipalities allied to work on affordable housing in Italy are asking the government to set up a law framing public housing, deliver programmes on homelessness and welfare, secure stable funding, regulate short term rental platforms, the deputy mayor of Bologna, Emily Clancy rightly pointed out.



## US Deputy Secretary for Urban planning and Housing, Adrienne Todman

"We know that the dignity to have a place to call home is essential to connect to society," Adrienne Todman, Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development said at the end of her keynote speech during the 'Emerging housing systems in the Americas' session. She highlighted the US rental assistance programme with 10.5 million payments to families, a new initiative to tackle unsheltered homelessness, the need for more tenant protection, and stressed that the government relies strongly on public-private partnerships to deliver affordable homes.

This is what we are taking away from her speech: "Also I believe that one person can make a difference. If you create a home you are literally changing a life. Creating a house makes change happen. Please think about this when your work on housing is difficult. Thanks to your work, homeless persons will be able to live with dignity. Families will find a home. In the end, housing is not about walls and roof. It's about the people. I things get difficult, think back to this festival. You and I are making housing happen. And let's get to work."





## ISHF, birthplace of partnerships

### Launch of the European Community Land Trust (CLT) network

In the words of Leilani Farha, Global Director of The Shift and former special UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing: “Forming a network, consolidating, coming together is a power move. The European Community Land Trust Network is a brilliant step to scale up a successful alternative to the dominant housing system across Europe”.

The CLT model is proven and ready to scale, reaching over 350 CLTs across Europe; they are a recognised best practice by the UN and EU for affordable housing and cohesive neighbourhoods; the approach is applied to green spaces, workspaces, community centres, shops, community energy systems and more.

Check their website - <https://www.clteurope.org/>





## Albania, Switzerland, Slovenia committed to setting up housing agencies

During the session dedicated to (re)defining housing agencies in Southern Europe, Marco Corradi highlights common issues in southern countries. First and foremost having a small and unaffordable rental sector which is excluding low and increasingly also middle income families. We need a system approach mobilising all sectors/resources with public administration leadership. We need to rethink housing in a logic of offering and sharing services, with people at the centre. These objectives are reflected in the 'Pantheon pact' signed by public housing federations in Italy Spain and Portugal.

Filipa Roseta says the basis for having common policies is having the right to housing as a basis. She added that with political will and agreement anything can be achieved, as proven for instance by the major urban renewal programme that in the 90s allowed Lisbon to get rid of slums and changed the life of thousands of people. An exhibition on this programme is displayed at ISHF2023.

Doris Andoni from the government in Albania is facing massive emigration of young people – unaffordability of housing is one of the causes behind this phenomenon. The National Housing Agency provides affordable housing for sale on a small scale – needs more injection of other sources of finance to be able to provide social housing.



## Local research observatories strengthen cooperation

How to measure housing affordability? It's a philosophical question, argues Thorsten Heitkamp. The perfect indicator doesn't seem to exist. However, housing observatories that are being set up across Europe use interesting approaches combining a range of data as we learnt through this session bringing together an impressive body of knowledge.

The Barcelona province observatory for instance stresses the importance of using objective and subjective indicators to understand shortfalls in housing affordability, in which area and for whom. The aspect highlighted by the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research was the importance of combining information on the costs and quality of homes.

The key point, one that is very hard to quantify, is what people can afford with the budget they have left after paying for housing costs – how housing expenses can support or hinder a bearable 'cost of living'. Some key trends have been mentioned: Milan and Barcelona highlight increasing rents which people who work in these cities no longer can afford. North Rhine Westfalia and Emilia Romagna regions brought forward the increasing costs of construction as a major current challenge. According to Daithi Downey, 87% of the homes that are up for sale in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown (Dublin) county are out of reach for households on median income.

Marco Peverin estimates that in Milan a person on an average white-collar job salary can afford to buy between 18 and 23 square meters of residential property with a 20-year mortgage loan. Not something that could be called a bargain.

In the Basque Country, the housing observatory found that buying a home requires young households to spend 58% of their salary on a mortgage. This is part of the evidence that triggered new policy measures such as rent subsidies for young people.

Leticia Ortega Madrigal of Instituto Valenciano de la Edificacion and Jordi Bosch of the Barcelona Metropolitan Observatory emphasized the strong link with policy, their research is driven by the purpose of identifying problems and ways to solve them.

In Emilia Romagna rents in public housing are 60 to 80% lower than market rents explains Marcello Capucci of the regional observatory – managing one of the most well-developed datasets in Italy.

Data on cooperative housing which represents 18% of dwellings in Zurich indicate higher affordability than the private sector and better representation of low incomes and vulnerable households.

In Amsterdam, tenants at market prices are the ones bearing the highest housing cost burden.







## ISHF, time for appraisal and criticism

### Solutions for good housing can be found far from home

The independent charity organisation World Habitat has a mission: sharing worldwide solutions for housing problems. Following this narrative, the World Habitat Awards, organised in partnership with UN-Habitat, recognise innovative and sometimes revolutionary projects from around the world every year. At today's event, four award-winning cases (three from Catalunya and a Scottish one) were presented.

The first one was the 2023 Bronze winner "Service for Intervention and Mediation in Situations of Loss of Housing and/or Occupancy (SIPH0)", which works closely with vulnerable groups that are at high risk of losing their homes and with homeless people. They provide administrative support and offer mediation between tenants and landlords. When prevention fails, they do everything possible to minimise damage and help homeless people to find new accommodation.

After that, the representative of social housing provider Hàbitat 3, Gold winner in 2019, highlighted the importance of cooperating with social organisations, and public administrations but also with the private sector, to guarantee the right to housing for people in situations of vulnerability.

The third organisation to present its projects was Sostre Cívic, which is the first Catalan cooperative housing entity. Their approach based on collective ownership as a tool to prevent individual speculation and to guarantee the right to housing got them the Silver prize in 2023. They currently manage 11 co-housing projects with 137 dwellings in the region.

Finally, the 2023 Gold winner Homes for Good, Scotland's first social enterprise letting agency. Their work consists of raising investments, buying old properties, renovating them (with special attention put to interior design), and letting them at affordable prices to vulnerable groups that are on waiting lists for social housing (more than 64 500 in Glasgow).





# Unlocking housing for Housing First

Homelessness continues to be an alarming issue in most countries in Europe, often driven by unaffordable housing, lack of supply and long-term political commitment. The Housing first hub and the Housing Solutions Platform have identified the issue of cooperation between housing and social workers as well as more in general integration of accompanying support services that can help people access and sustain housing tenancies on a permanent basis as key area for capacity building. We believe this kind of targeted approach is key for the success of local initiatives like housing first projects.

This workshop presented local-level innovative actions to address homelessness and housing exclusion through prevention and collaboration with housing and social services providers. Looking at housing mobilization but also the wrap-around support, collaboration with social workers, and alliance building with particular attention to be given to cooperation of municipalities with organizations that provide the wrap-around support that goes with the housing.

Policymakers, housing providers and social workers supporting people to access and keep housing were the key target groups of the event. In other words: how to successfully implement Housing First programmes on the ground.

Bent Madsen, President of Housing Europe, and Gyorgy Sumeghy, Director of Policy of Habitat for Humanity International opened the event. Bent highlighted that in order to bring housing to those who need it most and successfully implement housing first programmes, we need to make sure housing and social services work together and bring forward the experience from experts working in day-to-day life to inform policy making. Gyorgy Sumeghy spoke about the importance of the well-functioning welfare system to unlock housing for Housing First.

In the Panel discussion case studies sourcing housing for Housing first were discussed (from UK, Ireland and Spain), and reactions from cities were shared. Joey Lawrie, Homes for Good, Glasgow, UK informed that everybody deserves to have an affordable home because it is a foundation of everybody's life. 35 % of the properties are social rental. They are organizing a social rental agency that buys and rents private properties and rent them for social purposes.

## Response from cities

Renaud Payre, in charge of housing for the metropolis of Lyon underlined that the Metropole started implementing Housing First in 2018. In order to tackle the affordability issue, we need to mobilize housing supply which also includes the mobilisation of the private stock. Renaud Payre also sent a strong message to the EU level: the housing crisis is a new reality and we need to find a new paradigm: a new European Housing Policy. He explained that housing is a European issue (it is linked to employment, social issues, integration issues) so EU Institutions should consider it as European housing policy.

Coilin O'Reilly, Representative of Dublin city: stressed that Communicating with the host community is a tricky issue and needs a lot of time. The key is to build trust with communities where Housing First will be built.

The plan of Dublin is to build 707 dwellings for Housing First. 70 % of the need is one bedroom dwelling.

Carme Fortea, Director of homelessness service in Barcelona city spoke about the close collaboration between associations, NGOs since 1985. Barcelona has 800 social workers that support people accessing the 1700 Housing First dwellings of the city.

43 million euros is spent yearly on this issue. However, the demand is very high due to difficulty to access housing, migration, and low incomes.

Let's end  
HOMELESSNESS  
– for good

ISHF INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL HOUSING FESTIVAL BARCELONA 2023



Housing  
Solutions

Platform

Identifying, debating  
innovative  
for affordable housing



## The voice of tenant unions

The war in Ukraine has led to a 30% increase in construction costs, while mass migration to populated cities is growing, so how do we house people?

We will not build enough housing. We will never catch up. Therefore, vulnerable people end up in private housing. The cardinal law of the housing market is that "the most vulnerable always live in the worst housing".

The head of the EU office of the International Union of Tenants (IUT), Barbara Steenbergen called for taming rents and more caps that last for five years unless there are MAJOR quality increases in the housing. "If this is the case, rent can be raised by 3-5% - which is the normal rent increase for social and affordable housing providers," Barbara reminded.

A caution: It is the duty of the city to help tenants if there is no tenants union to fight on your behalf. However, furnished apartments are outside rent control law. So landlords can put up a mattress, table and chairs, and call it furnished.

"There is a lobby and there is a lobby," Barbara Steenbergen also said at the ISHF side event 'Towards a just housing system'. Some lobby for the good, some to make a profit. The International Union of Tenants (IUT) liaison office in Brussels, lobbies for the good, for the interests of tenants across Europe. She speaks directly to the tenants in the room, who form about half of the attendees of the event. 'Your landlord is always on the steering wheel. No matter where you are. Be careful which actions he will take with your rent.'

- Nevertheless, IUT cannot directly intervene in the interaction between tenant and landlord. Instead, Barbara talks with national and local governments all across Europe to call for:
- Public funding concentrated on public, affordable, cooperative, and social housing as well as on affordable private rental apartments with mandatory rent caps. No cap no cure, she says.

- Moratoria on evictions against tenants who have fallen behind with their payments.
- Policies on energy renovations to not negatively affect tenants leading to gentrification displacement and 'renovictions'.

Maximum level of institutional tenants' participation, ensuring a level playing field with landlords and housing providers.



## The ground beneath our feet

Land is fundamental to the delivery of housing. It is literally the foundation upon which housing is built, and those who control it, thus, also effectively control the delivery of new housing. In the context of insufficient availability of affordable housing in many regions, Housing Europe's event looked at the different ways in which government is using strong land management policies to boost the delivery of new social & affordable homes.

We presented a number of case studies from the Irish Housing Agency, Slovenia, and of course, from our #Housing2030 report which has an entire chapter dedicated to working land policies.



## Happiness at the joint screening of movies by Asertos in Alicante and Rochdale in Amsterdam

It was difficult not to be happy after watching the two short movies that were screened at ISHF side event 'How social housing and community regeneration benefit challenging neighborhoods'. We saw deeply motivated professionals in community projects and we heard citizens and tenants telling how the neighborhood changed for better.

The first movie was presented by Daniel Millor Vela and Neues Maronas Morant, who are program coordinator of the 'Asertos' project, to revitalize a run down neighborhood called 'El Cementerio' in Alicante, Spain. Right at the introduction we learned that this area is one of the worst in Alicante. Houses are run down, public space looks like a dump, people's lives are bad. 'My life is fighting for my loved ones' says a woman living in a shed.

Then we saw projects being carried out, with great involvement of the inhabitants. Roofs were repaired. Gardens were planted. People gathered for shared dinners. And it worked, people started being proud of their neighborhood, started helping each other, started working on public spaces and gardens themselves.

"We decided not to focus on solving the problems, but instead on strengthening the qualities that we saw," says Daniel Millor after screening the movie. 'In Spain 1/3 of the people live in vulnerable neighborhoods. There are so many resources, there is so much talent in those neighborhoods. We all know the theory behind innovation, it is using the same resources in a different manner to create something better. Here we did the same. We tried to raise awareness among the people of their qualities and to enable them to develop.' And it worked.



The second movie was about the ‘Bijlmer’ neighborhood, a vast seventies modernist style social housing district in the outskirts of Amsterdam. Rosita Mo-Ajok, Chiara Nykamp and Justin van der Ven represented the housing association ‘Rochdale’. This association is the biggest landlord in the district, and therefore is very present in the people’s lives. The movie makers asked themselves what value social housing providers bring to them and interviewed tenants, neighbors and experts working in the area.

The result was surprisingly positive. Rochdale –in particular its social workers– were not just regarded as a landlord, but also as the first person to talk to if there is any problem concerning the neighborhood. All interviewees couldn’t imagine that the Bijlmer would be the same if there was no social housing provided by a non-profit association. The area –as they expected– would be more run down, the rents would be much higher, the landlords wouldn’t care as much for the tenants as Rochdale did.



## ISHF, changing public narratives

### Media coverage



ISHF's super power is that it can debunk many myths and deeply-rooted stigmas about the sector, and the almost 50 pages above are a true evidence for that.

During the Festival week, our Secretary-General, Sorcha Edwards and Barcelona City Council responded to multiple questions from journalists from Catalunya's largest TV channel, the Business Post in Ireland, Europa Press, La Vanguardia, and many others.

# Mastering words to engage and empower communities

An almost 3-hour workshop organised by Housing Europe, Cwmpas, the Association of Catalan Housing Associations (GHS), and the municipality of the Hague explored and challenged methods of communicating and engaging with diverse communities to garner popular and political support for community-led solutions to the housing crisis. Five groups with professionals from different backgrounds brainstormed on some of the hardest communications questions around housing.

- How do we ensure that citizens/communities understand existing policy and make the best possible use of their existing resources and rights?
- How do we ensure that citizens/communities/marginalised groups influence future policy-making?
- How do we ensure that policymakers, housing justice groups, and tenant union advocates can communicate with each other and know what is happening on the ground?
- Can we reinvent the language to differentiate mission-led housing providers from profit-led investors?
- Housing wording in English sometimes leads to misunderstanding or enforcement of biases in non-native English environment. How do we make sure that ideas and ambitions are being understood by everyone without falling into a miscommunication trap?

We also heard from professionals, policymakers, researchers and activists who have cut through the noise. Carles Baiges from La Borda for instance stressed that many tend to think that social housing is for very vulnerable people, but in cities like Barcelona people who need affordable solutions are the vast majority.

Former UN rapporteur for adequate housing and an activist, Lelani Farha underlined that helping vulnerable people to understand that articulating their housing needs and asking for them is a human right.

There is so much noise right now. There is noise even within the sector, allies. I think the Shift has been successful through repetition. Housing is a human right, housing is home, challenging the financialisation and being very consistent. Just the constant repetitiveness has been part of the success," she shared.

When MEP Kim Van Sparrentak started her mandate as a member of the European Parliament, when preparing the political priorities for the Greens party, she and her colleagues realised that housing is an issue everywhere. Cross political groups came to the same realisation and the issue has been coming up a lot in political campaigns. To her, the debate about housing crises as a whole must be always backed up with good examples but first and foremost, it must be linked to other essential factors, such as health, improving the quality of life, the big environmental goals and more.

The housing researcher from the University of Barcelona, Montserrat Pareja also insisted that data findings must be oriented to improve the quality of life of people. In the last 10–15 years, she has witnessed a growing interest towards the sector and very advanced research, such as the European Network for Housing Research (ENHR), and the joint report between Housing Europe, UNECE, and UN-HABITAT, #Housing2030. "Something that is clear is that public sector cannot do everything on its own. The not-for-profit sector is a game changer, particularly in Spain where there was no such tradition," she added.

Welsh Member of Parliament, Mabon ap Gwynfor has been tirelessly saying that "people and people's relationships should be at the heart of discussion in Parliament". He has been very direct in criticising the neo-liberal mindset that is undermining our communities, also pointing out that "communities are being hollowed out because of the numbers of houses being sold as holiday homes", asking for "funds for the homeless assistance sector". To convince colleagues who might necessarily have the same beliefs as him, he chose to discuss gentrification and this is when he saw other groups understanding and willing to take action.







## Activists and well-known economists sharing the sector's mission

It was in a public bus, that Mariana Mazzucato and Leilani Farha coincidentally took together after attending a meeting, that they found out that their frameworks matched perfectly. Mazzucato is a famous professor of Economics of Innovation & Public Value at the University College London, known for her book 'The Entrepreneurial State' and 'Mission Economy'. Farha is the former special UN rapporteur on the right to adequate housing and now the global director of 'the Shift'. They decided to team up, resulting in the paper ['the right to housing: a mission-oriented and human rights-based approach'](#).

The two experts in their field teamed up again for ISHF plenary event 'Emerging housing systems in southern Europe'. Mazzucato was a keynote speaker and Farha as moderator of a large panel of practitioners from France, Greece, Italy, Spain, and Portugal.

In her keynote Mazzucato outlined that in reaching for the sustainable development goals governments should stop talking and start taking concrete actions. In particular in realising goal 11 'Housing for all', to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. She stated that governments don't take this seriously enough. Governments' main concern is continuing the current status quo, policies are meant to fix the system. We should move to an output oriented approach and restructure our economy to reach our goals. This might mean that we need to rethink how the public and the private sector work together. Governments must play a key role to organise this.

Additionally, Farha addressed why the human right to housing should be central. First she summarised the size of the problem of housing by sharing some dazzling figures. At least 1,8 billion people worldwide are homeless or live in inadequate housing, meaning that they have no access to water and electricity.

In Berlin in 2023 the level of new rental has risen by 27%. In 21 cities in Italy the rents have risen stronger than inflation. This is the result of the residential tenure is the biggest investment in the world. About USD268 trillion – almost three times the global GDP – is invested in housing. Housing is financialised and Leilani Farha said she remains very committed to advocate for governments to take action. She shortly outlined how Mazzucato and her think that governments should act by focusing on the mission, promoting public-private partnerships in which public investment exclusively leads to public value, by bringing in communities, as they are the experts. Governments should be convener, not the rulers.





## Having fun at ISHF is one of its 10 commandments

First time: stand-up comedy about housing & casual networking evenings at 'El Foro'

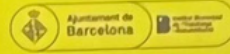


ISHF made it even to Beyonce's global tour thanks to our member, Legacoop Abitanti





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FIELD TRIPS

- 16.00—17.00 Besòs-Maresme urban regeneration site
- 30 WikiHousing Open House Day
- 31 IMPSOL housing projects in Sant Just Desvern and Gavà

16.30—17.00 OPEN INVITATION: FREE TO VISIT THE PAVILION

HOUSING  
2





# In 2025, the ISHF community is going to... Dublin, Ireland

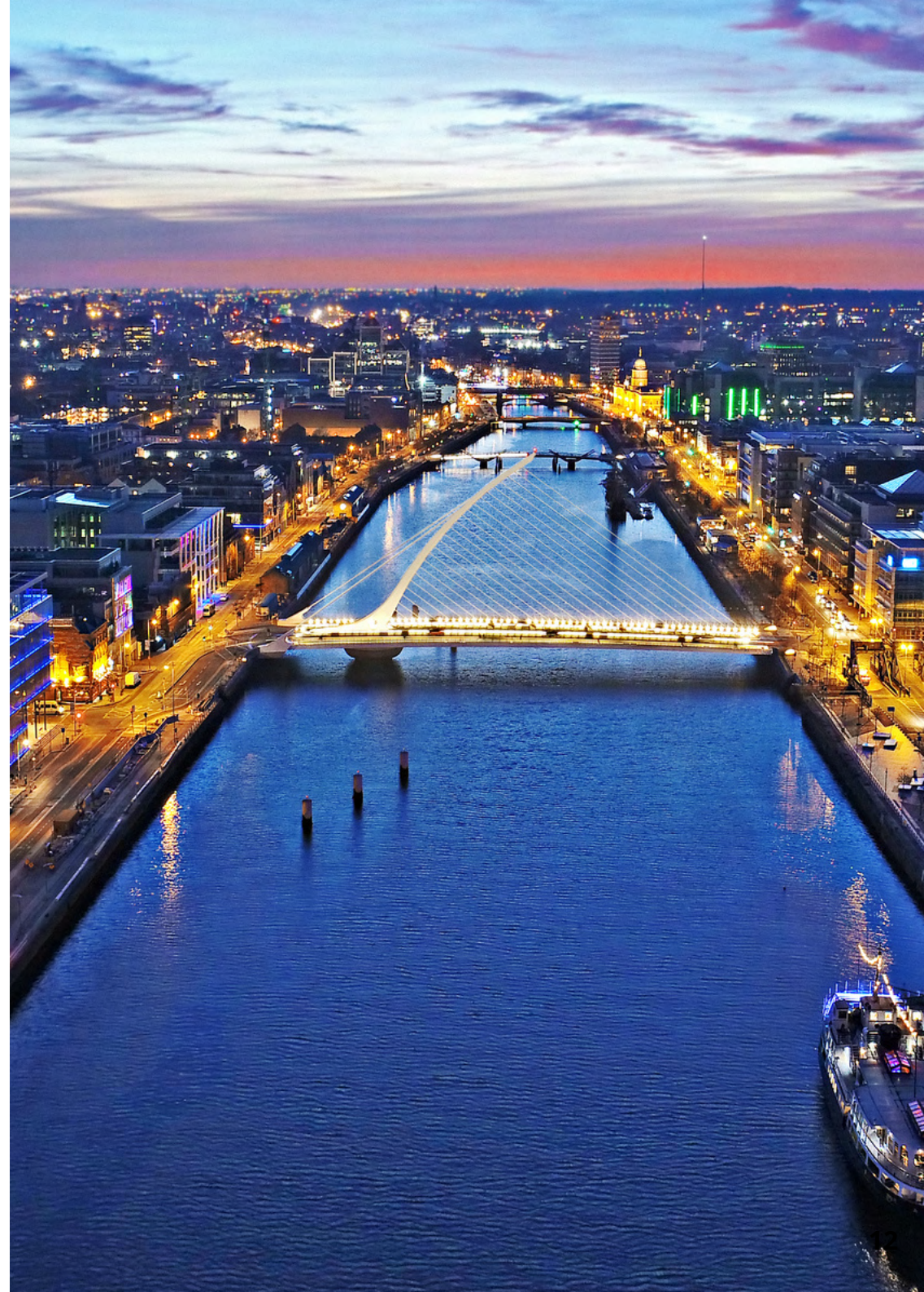
## Passing the baton

Ireland has a long tradition in public and social housing and yet, its affordable housing stock is relatively small and Ireland is suffering financialisation, like all other countries. Bob Jordan, CEO of the Housing Agency of Ireland stressed a few more challenges: the undersupply of housing, home ownership that gets out of reach for many, rising prices in the private rental sector, homeless and social exclusion.

Now, as Darragh O'Brien, the Irish Minister for housing O'Brien stated, we took the corner in housing. Making a plan is first identifying where the gaps and issues are, as well as what we need to fix them. O'Brien says he took 280 specific actions, and arranged long-lasting state funding. The state needs to lead by example, he said, and added that he truly believes in the power of public and social housing.

Speaking for the first time about the next ISHF edition in 2025, the panellists highlighted the the strong connection of Ireland with the rest of the Anglo-Saxon world, especially the UK and the US. Housing Europe's Secretary General, Sorcha Edwards also encouraged organisers to give room for new ways of addressing the housing challenges, but also that the Festival should be a celebration and a protest, encouraging debates.

As our Housing Europe President, Bent Madsen said: "After Amsterdam, Lyon, Helsinki, and now Barcelona we do believe that the Irish capital can trigger a true debate about what really matters to ordinary people."





# Stay in touch!



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