

12/13 April 2018

# VIENNA CONFERENCE

Promoting access to adequate, affordable and decent housing for all through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda and Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing

**CONFERENCE  
REPORT**



#### LEGAL NOTICE

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## Defining housing as part of basic human needs

Sustainable and affordable housing is an important topic for all of us; thus cities and communities worldwide have to ensure that adequate accommodation is available to everyone. Therefore, the Charter on Sustainable Housing, which was adopted in 2016 by the Committee on Housing and Land Management, is an important step in the right direction. The Charter was developed by an expert group under Vienna's chairmanship and reflects some of the main principles of Vienna's housing policies, such as the importance of financial, social and ecological sustainability of housing.

At an economic level, financing for social housing programmes needs to be secured over a long period; social sustainability can be achieved by developing housing policies to enforce social cohesion in our cities; finally, natural resources have to be saved in order to foster climate protection and ensure ecological sustainability.

Vienna has taken important steps at all three levels and will continue these efforts based on the principles of the Charter on Sustainable Housing. This means for Vienna that a diverse social mix in subsidised housing, where more than 60% of the city's population live, has to be maintained in the future. Moreover, the city has to refrain from privatising the public housing stock in order to guarantee affordable housing and to avoid stigmatised poverty ghettos, such as those existing in many cities.

This is why Vienna makes great efforts also internationally – e.g. in the framework of the European Union – to define housing as part of basic human needs rather than as a normal commodity. A resolution addressed to the EU, initiated by Vienna, has meanwhile been signed by the mayors of 30 European metropolises, and on 5 December of this year, it will be a topic again at the conference “Housing for All” to be held on the occasion of the Austrian EU Presidency.

In this context, it is Vienna's goal to become a competence centre for social housing policies. A first step was taken last year by starting a long-term communication process with experts from various disciplines and with the population in order to develop new housing models within the scope of IBA\_Wien, the Vienna International Building Exhibition on “New Social Housing”.

The UNECE Conference on promoting access to adequate, affordable and decent housing for all through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda and the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing is the starting signal to implement the goals of the Charter. Together, we will try our best to make sustainable housing affordable for everyone!

**Michael Ludwig**

Executive City Councillor for Housing, Housing Construction and Urban Renewal, Vienna

**Kurt Stürzenbecher**

Vienna City Council, Chair of the Committee on Housing, Housing Construction and Urban Renewal

## Improving the overall access to adequate, affordable, good quality, healthy and secure housing

Economic, environmental and societal issues, such as migration and an ageing society, put huge pressure on the housing sector. The demand for housing is constantly growing and accommodations need to be tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups, which in many cases cannot be met in the short term. Also, cities consume the biggest proportion of energy and produce a great amount of carbon emissions. In the UNECE region, buildings alone account for approximately 40% of energy consumption and 40% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Thus urbanisation is, indeed, one of the biggest challenges in our region that have to be met by taking measures at an international, national and local level.

The Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing does just that; it is based on the principles of environmental protection, economic effectiveness, social inclusion, participation and cultural adequacy. The Charter is a demonstration of the commitment of ECE member States to improve the overall access to adequate, affordable, good quality, healthy and secure housing and utility services, with particular attention to young people and vulnerable groups, and provides a framework for building smarter and more sustainable cities.

The implementation of the Charter has started with the establishment of various Geneva UN Charter Centres of Excellence in cities all over Europe – from Glasgow (UK) to Tallinn (Estonia) and Tirana (Albania) – and with a series of national and regional events and capacity-building activities. It is the task of the Charter Centres to bring the implementation of the Charter principles to the national and local level.

Apart from these activities, UNECE also takes action by supporting national reviews of housing, urban development and land management policies as well as practices through the preparation of Country Profiles on Housing and Land Management and by commissioning studies on adequate, affordable and sustainable housing. In addition, UNECE helps prepare the National Action Plans on Sustainable Housing, Urban Development and Land Management based on the Country Profiles' recommendations and promotes energy efficiency standards in buildings through a Joint Task Force.

However, measures to enforce an effective implementation of the Charter in the UNECE region at the national and local level are still needed, especially concerning awareness-raising for the Charter and more focused capacity-building activities. Also, a system of regular reporting on Charter implementation needs to be established.

The implementation of the Charter therefore depends on strong cooperation with national and local authorities and all relevant stakeholders. The UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management provides a platform for this cooperation, so we are looking forward to successfully continuing our work together with all member States.

**Andrew Vasilyev**

Deputy Executive Secretary, UNECE

## PROGRAMME OF THE VIENNA CONFERENCE

### Day 1 | 12 April 2018



#### 10.00 Study tour to Aspern Seestadt

Europe's largest urban development project

#### 14.30 Conference Opening

##### Introduction by the moderator

**Elena Szolgayova**, Chair of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management and Director General, DG Housing Policy and Urban Development, Ministry of Transport and Construction, Slovakia

##### Opening

**Kurt Stürzenbecher**, Vienna City Council, Chair of the Committee on Housing, Housing Construction and Urban Renewal

**Andrey Vasilyev**, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNECE

#### 15.00 Welcome address

**Wolfgang Förster**, Chair of the Expert Group for the development of the Geneva UN Charter for Sustainable Housing

#### 15.15 Implementing the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda and Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing at international and regional level

**Gulnara Roll**, Head of UNECE Housing and Land Management Unit

**Mark Draeck**, Industrial Development Officer, Department of Energy, United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO)

##### Questions & answers

#### 15.45 Implementing the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda and Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing at national level

**Brian M. Evans**, Head of Urbanism, Mackintosh School of Architecture, The Glasgow School of Art, UK; and Coordinator, Geneva UN Charter Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Housing in Glasgow

**Daniela Grabmüllerova**, Head of International Department, Ministry of Regional Development, Czech Republic

**Ernst Hauri**, Director, Federal Office for Housing, Switzerland

**Serhii Komnatnyi**, Head of State Fund for the Youth Housing under the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine

**Cédric Van Styvendael**, President of Housing Europe, Member of the Executive Committee of L'Union Sociale pour l'Habitat, France

#### 17.00 Adoption of Message by participants of the Vienna Conference on Sustainable Housing on access to adequate, affordable and decent housing for all

#### 17.15 Conclusions by the moderator

#### 19.30 Evening reception at housing estate "Interethnic Neighbourhood"

by invitation of SOZIALBAU AG (limited-profit housing association)



### Day 2 | 13 April 2018



#### 10.00 Official opening at Vienna City Hall

**Kurt Stürzenbecher**, Vienna City Council, Chair of the Committee on Housing, Housing Construction and Urban Renewal

##### Moderation

**Brian M. Evans**, Head of Urbanism, Mackintosh School of Architecture, The Glasgow School of Art, UK; and Coordinator, Geneva UN Charter Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Housing in Glasgow

##### Keynote speech

**Sasha Tsenkova**, Professor for Planning, Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Calgary

##### Questions and answers

#### 10.45 Ensuring access to adequate and affordable housing for all – Presentations

**Elena Szolgayova**, Chair of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management and Director General, DG Housing Policy and Urban Development, Ministry of Transport and Construction, Slovakia

**Wolfgang Förster**, Chair of the Expert Group for the development of the Charter of the Geneva UN Charter for Sustainable Housing and Coordinator International Building Exhibition "IBA\_Wien 2022"

#### 11.15 Panel discussion

**Susanne Bauer**, City of Vienna, Wiener Wohnen Kundenservice, Chair of Eurocities Working Group "Housing"

**Domenica Carriero**, Associate Economic Affairs Officer, UNECE

**Sorcha Edwards**, Secretary General at Housing Europe

**Kat Grimsley**, Director, MS in Real Estate Development, School of Business, George Mason University

**György Sümeghy**, Habitat for Humanity, Hungary

**Steffen Wetzstein**, Senior Research Fellow, Willy Brandt School of Public Policy, Germany; and Coordinator, Joint Working Group on "Policy and Research", European Network for Housing Research (ENHR)

#### 12.30 Lunch break







**13.15** Video clip on the International Building Exhibition IBA\_Wien “New Social Housing”

**13.20** Sharing Economy – How online platforms for private touristic renting change the housing market in cities

**Moderation**

**Johannes Lutter**, Urban Innovation Vienna

**Keynote speech**

**Brooks Rainwater**, Senior Executive & Director, Center for City Solutions, Washington DC

**14.00** Getting the grip: Local approaches to come to terms with Airbnb & Co

**Albert Eefting**, program manager for housing affairs, City of Amsterdam

**Michael Falzon**, Minister for the Family, Children’s Rights and Social Solidarity, Malta

**Klemens Himpele**, City of Vienna, Department for Economic Affairs, Labour and Statistics

**14.45** Panel debate

**15.15** Conclusions

**Elena Szolgayova**, Chair of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management

**Wolfgang Förster**, Chair of the Expert Group for the development of the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing



**WELCOME ADDRESS**

**Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing as an ambitious endeavour**

**Wolfgang Förster**

Chair of the Expert Group for the development of the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing and Coordinator of the International Building Exhibition “IBA\_Wien 2022”



This is indeed a great moment for our Committee. And, I may add, for myself. I had the pleasure to chair the Expert Group which developed the Charter on Sustainable Housing over several years. In the beginning, as some of you may remember, the aim was to develop a convention, and we changed this to a charter as a non-legally binding instrument that was finally unanimously adopted by the Committee. I stress this unanimity, as it does not seem self-evident that such a large number of member countries and many NGOs should agree on a very ambitious text like this Charter.

**Why is it so ambitious?**

I see a number of reasons:

First of all, housing has often been seen merely as a commodity, but here we stress that it is more than that; it is not only often referred to as the third skin of human beings, but it is a basic human requirement, like health and education, and therefore a task states have to deal with.

Secondly, the Charter is based on a very broad understanding of sustainability: economic, social AND ecological sustainability; it therefore touches on a number of delicate issues like – on the economic side – national tax instruments and budgets, or – on the social side – housing as a means to achieve an inclusive society, or – on the ecological side – energy saving and climate protection. These three levels must be closely connected to each other, and this requires a new way of thinking in politics and in administration.

Thirdly, the Charter may be an ambitious policy instrument, but when it comes to implementation we have to rethink our decision-making processes; we have to include all sectors of civil society. This is why we have organised this conference in two parts – the first day as a UN event to continue the discussion in the Committee, the second day as a public event, which we hope will attract experts from various fields as well as “normal” citizens.

As we start now to implement the Charter, this must also be seen as a chance for UNECE to come into contact with our population, may they be simply consumers or experts, politicians, practitioners, academia and so on. And to discuss housing policies with all strata of society. So this is a thrilling process which we are going to start this week, and we must also discuss on how to proceed, how to carry this process to all member countries in order to develop solutions based on local experiences and local resources, how to involve international NGOs on a regular basis. I wish us all a successful conference. Thank you for your participation!



## Implementing the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda and the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing at an international and regional level

### Gulnara Roll

Head of the UNECE Housing and Land Management Unit

- **Cooperation within the UNECE Committee.**

The implementation of the Charter on Sustainable Housing requires strong cooperation between many different partners. Therefore, a personal network of experts is especially important in order to exchange interesting best practices and to understand how these examples work in different social, economic and cultural contexts. The UNECE Committee has cultivated this type of interdisciplinary cooperation over the years, as it consists of three formal groups – the Committee on Housing, the Land Management Group and the Real Estate Market Advisory Group – that meet regularly and reflect together on upcoming projects. Different groups of experts focus on the topics of housing, urban development, land administration and on national reviews.

- **Implementing the UN Charter.** The Geneva Charter connects different topics, hence following an integrated approach that requires a wide range of different activities for its implementation. The Charter provides recommendations and inspiration to many countries, cities and regions, as they can learn from pioneers that develop interesting best practices. It is the task of the Committee to facilitate the implementation of these best practices in different countries.

- **Close link to other UN documents.** Next to the Geneva Charter, the Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda focus on housing and urban issues as well, so their implementation processes are closely linked. The Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted after the Charter was agreed and contains concrete goals and specific indicators, hence offering context for the implementation of the Charter. The

New Urban Agenda was adopted in 2016 and concentrates on different urban development issues, such as disaster prevention, that were also incorporated in the Charter.

- **Synergies for financing projects.** In the Action Plan for financial development, it is suggested to move from project-specific funding to building up synergies between different financial resources and to working in partnerships for urban development and housing projects. Many infrastructure projects are at large-scale level and interlinked with other measures and sectors, involving many different stakeholders. Therefore, a global framework is very important.

- **Important aspects for the implementation of the Charter.** A working partnership between organisations and countries (e.g. via Charter Centres) and the integration of social, environmental and cultural aspects are just as important for implementation as regular reviews of best practices and following up on the status of implementation.



## UNIDO promoting sustainable development

### Mark Draeck

Industrial Development Officer, Department of Energy, United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO)

- **Recent developments at a national and local level.** Many cities are interested in hosting a Charter Centre responsible for translating the Charter principles into the national context, e.g. by offering trainings for national and local stakeholders or working with the mass media. Also, an even stronger focus will be laid on international cooperation; therefore, there are plans to develop a regional observatory of urban-related sustainable development goals, which also makes international best practices available via new technologies (e.g. via interactive e-learning). In addition, the Committee is also working on Country Profiles in order to help countries update their housing legislation in coordination with the Charter goals. Next to these measures at a national level, the Committee will also focus on a city level by preparing smart and sustainable City Profiles to offer local best practice examples.



- **Role of UNIDO in terms of Social Development Goals.** UNIDO is a specialised agency of the United Nations that helps countries to stay competitive by promoting industrial development for poverty reduction, inclusive globalisation and environmental sustainability. Its main focus is on Sustainable Development Goal 9 – industry, innovation and infrastructure, but there are also links to other aspects of sustainability, such as clean energy and energy efficiency.

- **The example of the Bhopal dumpsite in India.** One best practice for sustainable development in a developing country that was supported by UNIDO was the relocation of the Bhopal dumpsite to the outskirts of the city in order to save the environment and reclaim the land for the locals. The project was facilitated by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) programme that invests in cities across the world and offers a platform to allow communities to exchange ideas.

- **Financial support for projects.** As municipalities are looking for financial support for their projects, UNIDO assists them by making investments bankable for investors and by helping them establish municipality cooperation. In this context, UNIDO serves as a link to the World Bank and other financial institutions.





Practical steps to promote sustainable housing

Panellists:

**Brian M. Evans**, Head of Urbanism, Mackintosh School of Architecture, The Glasgow School of Art, UK; and Coordinator, Geneva UN Charter Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Housing in Glasgow

**Daniela Grabmüllerová**, Head of the International Department, Ministry of Regional Development, Czech Republic

**Ernst Hauri**, Director, Federal Office for Housing, Switzerland

**Serhii Komnatnyi**, Head of the State Fund for the Promotion of Youth Housing Construction at the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine

**Abel Schumann**, Economist and Policy Analyst, OECD

**Cédric Van Styvendael**, President of Housing Europe, Member of the Executive Committee of the Union sociale pour l'habitat, France

The panel on implementing the Charter on Sustainable Housing focused on the questions of how the principles of the Charter are turned into practice and how these practical activities in their turn may align with the goals of the Charter. Status reports were given for the UK (Scotland), Czech Republic, Switzerland, Ukraine and the Housing Europe group.

- **Housing as a basic right.** The Human Rights Declaration states that housing is a basic socio-economic human right, so everyone should have access to affordable housing and a certain standard of living. Over the last few decades, however, residential property prices have been rising drastically; as *Abel Schumann* pointed out, an increase of around 40% in the OECD countries could be identified since 2010. This especially affects poor and



low-income households, who are forced to spend a large part of their income on housing. In order to offer affordable housing for all, it is therefore necessary to support the provision of public and social rental housing to complement the private housing market.

This problem was also mentioned by *Ernst Hauri*, who explained in his presentation that poor, disadvantaged and vulnerable population groups in Switzerland often lack access to adequate housing; as an example, he specified that 15% of rental households pay more than 30% of their income for housing. On the other hand, it is important that housing policy should not just focus on the poorest but make affordable housing available to all groups of society; in this way, the creation of “ghettos” can be avoided.

- **Policy adaptations based on the Charter goals.** To strengthen an inclusive approach that not only makes housing available but also improves the quality of the living environment, a regulatory policy framework and policy changes are required. *Brian Evans* showed in his example of Scotland that the Scottish government reversed the right to buy that had been in use for three decades in order to rebuild public estates and to avoid a drain of available public housing. In the Czech Republic and Ukraine, steps were taken to make public housing available to groups with special needs, such as senior citizens or young families. According to *Daniela Grabmüllerová*, the Czech housing policy regulations (Housing Policy Concept 2020) were revised to improve the quality of living and new programmes were launched



to support the provision of community housing. These programmes also made it possible to offer lower rents for certain groups.

In Ukraine, the State Fund for national and local housing programmes took over the task to implement a national housing policy based on the UN Charter and to support the implementation of government programmes to provide housing for specific groups, such as young people and pedagogical personnel. The Affordable Housing Programme, for example, is being implemented both at a local and a national level and offers subsidies of up to 30% of housing costs for eligible persons. *Serhii Komnatnyi* explained that the State Fund also offers long-term state loans for housing construction.

- **Cooperation between different government levels.** In order to establish new policies and implement these housing programmes, cooperation at the national and local level is crucial. *Daniela Grabmüllerová* stressed the importance of efficient global and regional cooperation and shared political interest and commitment; within the Czech government, various platforms for debating the UN documents and goals are used to identify synergies between relevant stakeholders. In addition, it was suggested to cooperate also at the EU level. The Housing Europe project “Housing 4All” was offered by *Cédric Van Styvendael* as one example of a campaign that initiates cooperation at the EU level between EU institutions, Member States, local authorities and housing providers.
- **Establishing partnerships.** However, cooperation is not only required at government level but also



between other stakeholders within the transformation process towards sustainable and affordable housing. In Glasgow, three types of partnerships were established between innovation facilities (in the public and private sectors), research facilities (e.g. universities) and communities, which allows them to work together towards integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into their work. Other countries, such as the Czech Republic, put a focus on the involvement of all partners and experts in regular debates and events.

*Cédric Van Styvendael* proposed a multi-stakeholder approach that involves cities, industry, academia, care and social service providers. He also put special emphasis on the important role of professional and efficient housing providers, who need to be involved more strongly in the implementation process of the UN documents.

- **Environmental challenges for sustainability in housing.** Apart from the social aspects, *Ernst Hauri* pointed out the relevance of ecological sustainability in housing. This, however, poses several challenges that have to be met in the near future. In Switzerland, urban sprawl results from a high share of second homes and a trend towards greenfield construction. In order to prevent urban sprawl, a new law was adopted to limit the share of second homes to 20% and to restrict greenfield construction. Another challenge is high energy consumption especially in older buildings, which was met by establishing higher energy standards for new buildings and subsidy programmes for the energetic refurbishment of older buildings. Also, tax incentives for housing renewal activities are granted. *Hauri* moreover mentioned the importance of sustainability networks, such as “Netzwerk Bauen Schweiz”, that guarantee a common understanding of sustainability, standards and labels.

## Solutions and ideas to create affordable housing and cities for all

**Sasha Tsenkova**

Professor of Planning, Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Calgary



- **Lack of affordable housing.** Recent data shows that one third of persons worldwide do not have access to affordable housing. In the UNECE region, which consists of 56 countries, around 106 million people are affected by this shortage of affordable housing. This is a great challenge, but also an opportunity to make a difference. Despite a common vision for more affordable housing, recent developments went into another direction: instead of public housing, private homeownership was promoted. This created an asset-building culture that brought long-term damage to cities when the mortgage markets collapsed.
- **Density.** Compact, integrated cities embrace diversity and offer a lot of benefits; however, cities in the U.S. and Canada, but also in Europe, still promote single-family homes and low-density neighbourhoods, so urban sprawl is a common problem. This leads to a huge ecological footprint, which in the case of London is 293 times the area of the city. But also the global financial crisis has proved that private homeownership is not sustainable. Many homes were affected by foreclosure, and cities started to demolish houses. This left 8 million people in Europe without homes despite large numbers of unused secondary homes that are permanently empty. In some cities, such as KalugERICA in Serbia, fast urban growth, inadequate planning and a lack of affordable housing have led to the establishment of informal settlements.

- **Diversity.** Another critical aspect is the diversity of housing (types). In cities like Riga, privatisation of the housing stock has led to a lack of diversity and other long-term problems; in order to intensify diversity in these areas, the City of Riga started to bring old and new together, which offered opportunities to reshape existing neighbourhoods and add more diversity. In Amsterdam, over 75% of the housing stock is classified as social housing; the city authorities planned to decrease the share of social housing in favour of private homeowners in order to create stronger diversity of ownership and social diversity. The City of New York followed a different approach with its New Housing Opportunities Program. The aim of this scheme is to strengthen diversity in neighbourhoods by offering below-market mortgages to developers for the construction of moderate-income rental housing.
- **Design.** Another aspect to address shortage in affordable social housing is urban design, which strongly applies to strategic decisions on land zoning. An inclusionary housing design therefore requires an inclusionary zoning approach, as already happens in Vancouver. Also, access to land and land ownership must be carefully managed.

## Ensuring access to adequate and affordable housing for all

**Elena Szolgayová**

Chair of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management and Director General, DG Housing Policy and Urban Development, Ministry of Transport and Construction, Slovakia



- **UNECE Country Profiles.** The globalised world has to face various challenges, such as demographic and climate changes, results of economic crises and the growing gap between rich and poor. In order to handle these challenges, they have to be reflected in policies at a local, national, European, UNECE and global level. Especially the local level that is influenced by regional and national frameworks as well has to be considered in this context, since operative decisions on housing are made by local actors. UNECE is the only formal intergovernmental platform in this region that offers the opportunity for professional and politically neutral discussions on sustainable housing, urban development as well as land administration and management. Country Profiles are one important tool that is used by UNECE to investigate these aspects. International, independent experts analyse policies of different countries and compile a set of recommendations that target the legal, institutional and financial frameworks for sustainable housing and urban development. These Country Profiles offer support to countries, as they raise awareness of national and local stakeholders on how far it is possible to change things on a local scale.
- **Global agreements.** At the level of the UNECE region, four documents are relevant for sustainable housing and urban development. The 2030 Agenda focuses on the Sustainable Development Goals. The New Urban Agenda can be understood as a second step towards implementing the 2030 Agenda for urban regions; it is a guideline that describes how to achieve Sustainable Development

Goal 11 and how to create people-centred communities. In addition, the Urban Agenda for the EU was installed as a more formalised agreement of EU countries on urban housing issues. Finally, the Geneva Charter on Housing attempts to formulate the main principles of sustainable housing – economic aspects, environmental aspects, social aspects and cultural adequacy – and to summarise experiences of countries on how to approach housing.

The aim of these four documents is to improve the quality of life, which should be achieved by using an intergovernmental approach that represents the opinions of the countries. This process is supported by UNECE, which will also prepare a framework for monitoring the implementation process and enforcing capacity building. The implementation process will focus on small and medium-sized cities.

- **Geneva Charter Centres.** One aim of UNECE is the establishment of Geneva Charter Centres, which develop ideas and principles for stakeholders in different fields that are part of the Charter. Many countries have already expressed interest in hosting a Charter Centre.
- **EU activities.** Within the EU, 80 million people have difficulties affording their housing costs and 48% of young people have to live with their parents, since they cannot afford their own housing. Therefore, the New Urban Agenda and the Urban Agenda of the EU are not just documents with principles, but also aim to provide countries with better EU regulations, financing and knowledge on specific urban issues. These issues are sub-





**Adequate and affordable housing for all**

**Panellists:**

**Susanne Bauer**, City of Vienna, Wiener Wohnen Kundenservice, Chair of the Eurocities Housing Working Group

**Domenica Carriero**, Associate Economic Affairs Officer, UNECE

**Sorcha Edwards**, Secretary General of Housing Europe

**Kat Grimsley**, Director, MS in Real Estate Development, School of Business, George Mason University

**György Sümeghy**, Habitat for Humanity, Hungary

**Steffen Wetzstein**, Senior Research Fellow, Willy Brandt School of Public Policy, Germany; and Coordinator, Joint Working Group on Policy and Research, European Network for Housing Research (ENHR)

**Key topics of the discussion:**

- **Housing as a central topic.** Cities are challenged by a fragmented housing market and growing costs as well as an insufficient supply of affordable and sustainable housing stock. But also on the demand side, urban housing markets are influenced by an increasing risk of poverty, lower incomes and varying access to financing in cities. In this context, Susanne Bauer also mentioned the gender dimension; especially women are threatened by poverty and therefore have a special need for affordable housing.

Due to its strong influence on life in cities, housing is not a stand-alone topic but is strongly interlinked with other urban challenges, such as inequality, sustainability, waste, crime, pollution or traffic. So, in order to address the need for responsible and adequate housing, many creative organisations have tried to tackle these challenges by developing social housing projects for specific groups of

people, such as refugees or people with dementia. Therefore, despite its negative reputation and the general stigmatisation of social housing in public discourse, *Sorcha Edwards* reminded the audience to keep in mind that social housing is not the problem, but the solution when it comes to solving problems in cities.

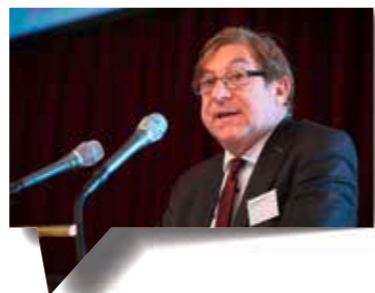
- **Putting affordability on governments' agendas.** Within the context of social housing, *Steffen Wetzstein* pointed out that it is important to keep in mind that it is not the private sector that will take care of the implementation of housing projects, but that it is governments that will need to resolve housing problems. Therefore, the issue of affordability must be on the agenda of urban governments and policies have to be adapted accordingly in order to address these housing challenges. Also, housing policies need to be discussed at a European level.

- **Public versus private housing market.** In Europe, the amount of public housing stock is relatively low (around 11%) compared to the housing stock that is owned by private landlords. As a result, housing prices often rise faster than people's incomes, which drives cities to adopt a variety of strategies to strengthen affordability. As an example, *Sorcha Edwards* mentioned Bristol, which relies on local



sumed in 12 themes, the first four of which focus on housing. The Housing Partnership, which deals with these themes, is coordinated by Vienna and Slovakia. Its mission statement is the essence of the Geneva Charter, and it focuses on affordable housing for all citizens.

- **Slovakia as an example.** Slovakia has adopted its state housing policy according to the Geneva Charter and has structured it along the four principles of housing sustainability. Moreover, the urban development policy was structured in line with the principles of the Sustainable Development Goals.





stakeholders to make sure that social housing is delivered. Another example is Finland, where people receive subsidies to rent private housing; however, this system is not effective and leads to smaller flats and higher rents, since private housing providers aim at increasing the price per square metre. *Steffen Wetzstein* offered another example from Germany, where land is taxed in order to redistribute money into the social housing sector. *György Sümeghy* also explained that in former socialist countries public housing was privatised and tenants paying social rents were given the opportunity to buy property at a cheap price, hence leading to a share of public rental stock of less than 5% and a “society of poor house owners”. In order to make housing affordable for these people, Habitat for Humanity cooperates with financing institutions to provide homeowners with micro loans and helps homeowners in multi-apartment estates to work and act as a community. From his point of view, a policy environment that makes it easy for homeowners to improve their housing, combined with targeted subsidies, is the solution.

- **High costs of inadequate housing.** Inadequate housing not only triggers social problems but also has a negative influence on the financial sector of a city. *Sorcha Edwards* stated that cities withdrawing from state housing have to face high costs. These are caused, for example, by the exclusion of young people from the housing market, health problems caused by mould and inadequate living conditions, but also by old housing stock in need of refurbishment. Apart from that, a large part of the population, being unable to find affordable accommodation within the city, is pushed out of the cities.
- **Energy efficiency as a relevant factor.** In this context, taking into account the importance of energy efficiency of housing also helps to reduce costs, since the construction sector accounts for 40% of total energy consumption worldwide. As



*Domenica Carriero* pointed out, increasing the energy efficiency of the housing sector not only helps mitigate global climate change and frees more energy for alternative uses, but also improves health and comfort and increases savings for tenants. In order to tackle the topic of energy-efficient housing, UNECE in 2016 established the Task Force on Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings, which focuses on compiling studies and guidelines, creating an expert database and organising training programmes for cities. In Vienna, sustainability and energy efficiency are already criteria in developers’ competitions.

- **Need for capacity building and knowledge exchange.** Both *Susanne Bauer* and *Sorcha Edwards* stressed the importance of know-how and capacity exchange between cities in order to allow them to work together on solving problems. This is one of the main tasks of Eurocities, a network of major European cities, which brings together cities, national governments and EU institutions to identify challenges and solutions and develop recommendations for legislative acts.
- **Putting non-legislative agreements into action.** Another example for sharing knowledge between different cities was offered by *Kat Grimsley*, who explained the UNECE Guidelines on condominium management. The document was established to offer international guidance and is now being updated in order to include new challenges, such as Airbnb, energy efficiency and affordability. Moreover, aspects such as taxation and new technologies/digitalisation will be discussed and included in the recommendations.

## KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

### Sharing economy – The impact of online platforms on city housing markets



#### Brooks Rainwater

Senior Executive & Director, Center for City Solutions, National League of Cities (NLC), Washington, D.C.

- **Developments in housing affordability.** Over the past three years, house prices have risen by an average of 13% a year worldwide; in cities like Berlin, house market prices rose by as much as 21%. The exponential growth of Airbnb and other home-sharing platforms contributes to this development. Larger cities now face the challenge of coping with these developments by setting up stricter registration requirements and enforcement along with a suitable taxation system.
- **Reasons for the rise of the sharing economy.** According to Brooks Rainwater, urbanisation and economics are among the main drivers of the sharing economy. Due to an increased movement towards urban areas, the proportion of people living in cities will rise to 70% in 2050. This will put pressure on the housing market and lead to higher costs of living. Also, changes in the work environment (e.g. more contract work instead of full-time jobs) may be expected, which in its turn will trigger stronger diversification between people on the top and at the bottom. All this leads property owners in cities to utilise their property to make more money (e.g. by renting it out to tourists), further constraining the ability of (poorer) people to rent such dwellings.
- **User preferences and lifestyle changes.** Another factor that influences the success of Airbnb and similar is a lifestyle shift towards technology use and experiences that people want to spend their money on (“living like a local”). By selling the experience of living in a certain neighbourhood (including additional offerings like walking tours, etc.), people feel that they become more a part of the city they are visiting.

- **Relationship between cities and sharing platform providers.** According to recent surveys by NLC, 39% of U.S. cities classified their relationship with home-sharing platforms as tenuous or very poor, whereas 55% classified it as good or very good. Among the main benefits cited by cities for home sharing were entrepreneurial activity, increased taxable revenue and constituent acceptance (officials recognise that their constituents like the services offered). On the other hand, municipal administrations view public safety, non-compliance with current standards and the inability of cities to collect revenue as major concerns. As a result, only 16% of cities have so far entered into a formal partnership with a sharing company that operates on-site – and most of them are not home-sharing platforms, but transportation-sharing companies.
- **Rising rents due to Airbnb.** For every 10% growth in Airbnb listings in U.S. cities, the average rent increases by 0.4%. In San Francisco, for example, this has led to a rise in average rents by 15% within one year. This puts a lot of pressure on the local housing markets, since the number of listings is growing fast – from around 1.5 million listings a few years ago to more than 4 million listings today.
- **Reduced availability of housing.** In New York City, for example, the number of apartments would increase by 10% if short-term rental listings were returned to the rental market, whereas in San Francisco 23% of currently available vacant units have been removed from the housing market because of Airbnb rentals. Also, in Washington the number of low-cost units is going down, minimising the number of affordable and available housing units for low-income households, while at the same time the number of Airbnb listings is going up.
- **Regulations for home sharing.** In order to contain the number of Airbnb listings, larger cities have adopted laws and restrictions for homeowners





renting out their flats. In New York State, it is now illegal to offer flats in multiple-apartment dwellings for rent for a period of fewer than 30 consecutive days, unless the owner is present during the guest's stay. In San Francisco, a stricter short-term rental law was instituted recently, which makes the registration of hosts mandatory. As a result, the listings dropped by half overnight. Moreover, San Francisco has put a cap on the number of days to rent out units, limiting rental times per apartment to 90 days a year.

Commercial operators with a large amount of units pose a regulatory challenge in many U.S. cities. In order to avoid instrumentalisation of the housing market, cities try to figure out a way to get these operators off the platforms.

- **Enforcement of regulations.** Many cities have difficulties with regulating the home-sharing sec-

tor, as they cannot provide a sufficient number of building inspectors to check the regulations. New York, however, has increased the funding for officers checking for law violations and illegal renting.

- **Recommendations.** Based on the NLC studies, Brooks Rainwater recommended that platforms should focus on becoming partners of cities to improve inclusivity rather than create challenges and to incorporate this approach in their business models. Also, platforms should share their data with cities – even internationally – to improve the long-range planning of short- and long-term rentals and potential forecasting. Apart from that, cities must be open to change and embrace working with the private sector, which is the key driver for jobs and wealth. Partnerships between the city and sharing platforms can help to improve the lives of citizens and add value to local economies.



PANEL DISCUSSION

**Getting the grip: Local approaches to come to terms with Airbnb & Co.**



**Panellists:**

**Albert Eefting**, Program Manager for Housing Affairs, City of Amsterdam

**Michael Falzon**, Minister for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity, Malta

**Klemens Himpele**, City of Vienna, Municipal Department of Economic Affairs, Labour and Statistics

**Brooks Rainwater**, Senior Executive & Director, Center for City Solutions, NLC, Washington, D.C.



The three representatives from Amsterdam, Malta and Vienna gave an overview of recent developments in the home-sharing market in their cities/countries and discussed challenges and solutions.

- **High number of tourists.** One challenge that all three regions have to face is the large amount of tourists coming to the city/country. As *Michael Falzon* pointed out, 1.3 million tourists come to Malta every year, which is almost three times the number of the island's population. This results in a high number of tourist accommodations and explains the success of Airbnb and other platforms.
- **Airbnb and its effects on the housing market.** In Vienna, there are 10,000 apartments available on Airbnb; 2,000 of these flats are rented out throughout the entire year, so they are withdrawn from the housing market. However, Vienna is less affected than other cities due to the high share of social housing that cannot be rented out. So far, it has been impossible to prove a direct connection between an increasing number of Airbnb listings and rising housing prices. In Amsterdam, as many as 20,000 apartments are offered on home-sharing platforms, which ranks it 4<sup>th</sup> amongst European cities, despite its compact size. As the housing market in Amsterdam is very

tight and prices for rental apartments are high, both citizens and city officials view the strong growth of Airbnb critically.

Conversely, in Malta short-term rental housing is less of a problem, since more than 80% of citizens are homeowners and therefore do not have to compete with tourists for affordable flats.

Looking at U.S. megacities, *Brooks Rainwater* stated that problems concerning affordable housing are exacerbated by Airbnb and other platforms, but they are not the main cause for challenges affecting the housing market.

- **Big players on the Airbnb platform.** The discussants agreed that large providers with multiple flats for rent using home-sharing platforms to commercialise the housing market are a challenge for cities. However, as *Klemens Himpele* pointed out, the biggest player in Vienna is an organisation that has been renting out holiday homes for many years and uses Airbnb now as just another marketing instrument to enter a new market. *Albert Eefting* remarked that large investors in Amsterdam cannot make big profits by using home-sharing platforms compared to other ways of maximising profit. This is also due to strict law enforcement; the chances for large commercial companies to be caught are considerable, so the costs for fines





and legal procedures would be higher than the profit.

- **Regulations in the home-sharing sector.** All three representatives agreed that regulations and restrictions are necessary to control the home-sharing market. Four years ago, the City of Amsterdam implemented a policy regarding Airbnb which restricts the number of rental days per year to 60 and to 4 persons per apartment and stay. Furthermore, hosts have to notify the city about the stays and must pay the tourist tax. Compliance with these rules is very important to the City Administration, which is why it conducts digital research to identify rented-out homes in order to penalise violations of these regulations. This can be done by means of administrative fines or by closing down apartments for rent, for example if the whole building is rented out as a “mini hotel”. Vienna focuses on the mandatory registration of persons who rent out their homes as well as on the obligation of platform providers to share their data. Moreover, the use of building codes to restrict short-term rental in areas defined as residential districts is a relevant aspect. Other regulations applying to regular hotels, such as trade law, city tax, consumer protection and income tax, should also be applied to the home-sharing sector. However, *Klemens Himpele* remarked that even though the rules are clear, their enforcement might prove difficult.
- **Use of platform data.** Vienna has been provided with the data of 10 out of 16 sharing platforms operating in Vienna. This makes it possible to contact the hosts and to collect taxes. Data-sharing agreements with other platforms are still under discussion. *Rainwater* agreed that it should be mandatory for platform providers to share their data with the cities. However, as *Eefting* mentioned, companies like Airbnb often invoke privacy laws to avoid having to share their data.

- **Attitude towards home-sharing platforms.** *Albert Eefting* pointed out that although there are arrangements with Airbnb and booking.com, city officials do not consider them partners of the city. Also, citizens often criticise Airbnb for its influence on the housing market and reports of complaints have increased strongly over the past few years. Vienna views home sharing critically as well; as *Himpele* mentioned, Vienna does not want to be a museum, but a city with a high quality of life that people want to live in, so the housing market should focus on the needs of citizens and not on short-term visitors.
- **Further planned activities.** In the future, Amsterdam plans to conclude new agreements with platforms; moreover, the obligation for notifications should be embodied in national law. Furthermore, the cap on rental days will be reduced from a maximum of 60 to 30 days. In Vienna, it will be necessary for national authorities to establish stricter regulations, since the tax system is primarily regulated at the national level; the Vienna City Administration needs better instruments to enforce the relevant laws. In addition, both city representatives agreed that knowledge exchange between cities (e.g. through a network) might be helpful to learn more about how other cities deal with similar problems and to put more pressure on the European Commission to regulate the sharing economy at the European level.



## Conclusion of the Vienna UNECE Conference



1. The conference organised by UNECE in cooperation with the City of Vienna concentrated on “promoting access to adequate affordable and decent housing for all through the implementation of the UNECE Charter on Sustainable Housing”.
2. It was attended by 70 delegates representing UNECE member States as well as local authorities, academia and international organisations.
3. The participants reconfirmed that sustainability of housing is understood in a threefold way: 1) economically – meaning the creation of long-term financing instruments, 2) socially – meaning a good social mix in residential areas and aiming at broad strata of the population to avoid social ghettos, 3) ecologically – by stressing the contribution of housing to environmental and climate protection. These three dimensions of sustainability must be combined with cultural adequacy in the local context.
4. This means that housing programmes developed by member States must address large parts of the population while keeping in mind the specific needs of vulnerable groups.
5. Implementation of the Charter requires the participation of all stakeholders – including inter alia planners, the construction industry, financing institutions, local politicians and administrators, academia, media and the general public.
6. The conference participants also stressed the importance of the state as the leader in this process.
7. The conference welcomes the idea to hold more local and sub-regional workshops to include local stakeholders in the implementation process.
8. The conference participants ask the Committee and its Secretariat to organise such workshops together with interested member States, local authorities and civil society organisations.
9. The conference participants invited the Committee Bureau to consider the organisation of an in-depth discussion on the implementation of the Charter during the next session of the Committee as well as to strengthen the network of Geneva UN Charter Centres, which support Charter implementation in the countries at the national, local and regional levels.
10. The conference participants expressed their gratitude to the Committee Secretariat and to the City of Vienna for organising this event.



## Quality Living for All: On Access to adequate, affordable and decent Housing

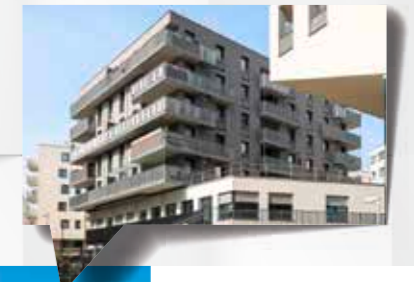
1. We, the delegates to the Vienna UNECE Conference on Sustainable Housing, welcome the start of the implementation process of the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing, endorsed by UNECE on 16 April 2015.
  2. We recognise that sustainability of housing policies and programmes as a means for living should be understood through their four dimensions:
    - a) economic and financial sustainability, meaning stable financing and use of innovative instruments for housing construction and renovation,
    - b) social sustainability through inclusion and participation, meaning the contribution of housing policies to social cohesion in cities,
    - c) environmental sustainability, meaning sustainable use of natural resources and addressing issues of climate change, and
    - d) cultural adequacy, meaning housing policies are implemented considering cultural context and local conditions.

These four dimensions of housing policies should be addressed in an integrated manner. Through the application of the integrated approach, housing policies will ensure access to decent, adequate, affordable and healthy housing for all.
  3. We reiterate that the people-centred Charter principles support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 11 to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, and the New Urban Agenda. To effectively implement the Charter, the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda, effective policies and actions need to be developed and realised at all levels. They should be supported by international cooperation to contribute to sustainable development in the region.
  4. We underline the importance of housing practices which support an improved environmental, health and energy performance of dwellings, resulting in secure, higher quality of life of inhabitants.
  5. We also stress that to meet people's needs, secure and neutral tenure should be ensured.
  6. We urge that different groups of the population should clearly be addressed in housing policies, without creating poverty areas, i.e. by aiming at socially mixed communities.
  7. We recognise the importance of democratic and transparent processes in housing construction and retrofitting based on expert knowledge, international knowledge transfer and exchange of best practices which promotes data collection for evidence-based housing policies, transparent statistics and a broad public debate about all aspects of housing development.
  8. We encourage all member States and stakeholders of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management to continue the implementation process of the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing according to the Guidelines for the Charter adopted by the Committee; through the organisation of further regional, national and local events; the establishment of Geneva UN Charter Centres of Excellence; preparation of Country Profiles on Housing and Land Management (including respective Action Plans); and conducting relevant studies and demonstration projects.
  9. We appreciate the potential of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management as an intergovernmental neutral platform in the UNECE region for sharing best practices in sustainable housing, urban development and land administration.
  10. We express our gratitude to the Committee Secretariat and to the City of Vienna for the organisation of this conference.
- Adopted by the Vienna Conference on Sustainable Housing on 12 April 2018**

## Study Tour to Aspern Seestadt

At the beginning of the conference, a study tour to Aspern Seestadt in the 22nd municipal district in Vienna was organised. The participants visited the local information centre at Aspern IQ for a first introduction to this urban development area and had a guided tour to a social housing project by the developer Sozialbau.

- **Europe's largest urban development project.** Aspern Seestadt is currently Europe's largest urban development project, and the majority of its residents will live in subsidised housing of various types once the construction process is completed.
- **Development of Aspern Seestadt.** Aspern Seestadt was an airfield after the First World War. Later on, it was used for car racing events. The whole area is now owned by the City of Vienna, but development has been handed over to Wien 3420 Aspern Development AG, a partly private company. The construction activities are based on a master plan by the Swedish architect Johannes Tovatt, who developed the idea to build the new city quarter around an artificial lake. Upon completion in 2030, some 20,000 people will live and work in Aspern Seestadt. As in the rest of Vienna, subsidised rental housing will play an important role in Aspern Seestadt as well. All subsidised housing estates will be the result of developers' competitions, where housing associations together with architects, landscape planners, ecologists and sociologists present their project to an interdisciplinary jury that judges each project along four sets of criteria, the "four-pillar model" – architecture, costs, social sustainability and ecology –, hence guaranteeing sustainable implementation of the project.
- **Located between two city centres.** One specific aspect that makes Aspern Seestadt attractive is its location between the two national capitals Vienna and Bratislava. The city centre of Vienna







can already be reached by Underground in about 15 minutes; the railway line to Bratislava is now being improved in order to allow for high-speed connections to Bratislava Main Station in about 20 minutes.

- **Social and functional mix.** Aspern Seestadt has been developed based on several principles. A good social mix will be ensured by offering subsidised rental housing to an extent of about 60%, along with privately financed homeownership and student housing. In addition, a number of “Baugruppen” (self-build groups, i.e. self-organised small cooperatives which often provide very innovative solutions to housing) will be established. Moreover, housing for special needs and some units for assisted housing were included in all estates. Apart from that, a functional mix of living and working, if possible in the same building, was guaranteed.
- **Community building for residents.** There are also shared common rooms and open spaces for residents in all estates. The area management company organises events and community-building activities, in which residents are encouraged to take part.
- **Priority of public transport and walking.** One main planning focus was placed on easy accessibility by public transport. For example, the Underground line was completed before the start of construction work for buildings. Residents can have cars, but walking to the nearest public transport

should always be shorter than to the car park. In addition, most estates have their own car-sharing schemes. All buildings must have bike storage rooms, and there are bike rental stations throughout Aspern Seestadt. In order to make walking more attractive than driving, the concept of a “city of short distances” was implemented here. Shops and schools must be easy to reach within walking distance; thus all shops are located on the ground-floor level of dedicated shopping streets, which are managed by a management company.

- **Ecological sustainability.** All buildings are either low-energy or passive houses and connected to the city-operated district heating system. The use of environmentally friendly materials is encouraged in the developers’ competitions for each housing project.
- **Lighthouse projects.** Special construction projects, such as the world’s tallest timber building, function as lighthouse ventures for Aspern Seestadt. One important project in terms of inclusivity is the planned “campus of religions”, where all religious groups will share a common building for their cultural or social activities. Another interesting feature is that all streets and squares are named after important women, such as female pioneers in the sciences or arts or anti-Nazi resistance fighters, in order to compensate for the small number of streets named after women in the older parts of Vienna.



## Evening reception

The evening reception took place after the first conference day in the subsidised housing project “Interethnische Nachbarschaft” (“interethnic neighbourhood”) in Vienna’s 23<sup>rd</sup> municipal district. The participants of the reception were welcomed by *Josef Ostermayer*, CEO of the housing company Sozialbau.

- **The housing project.** The housing project “Wohnmodell Interethnische Nachbarschaft” was built 15 years ago by the developer Sozialbau, Austria’s biggest limited-profit housing association, and offers 150 flats. In 2005, it received the first Vienna Housing Award. Today, it is part of a large urban development axis along the U6 Underground line.
- **Housing for migrants.** The construction of “Interethnische Nachbarschaft” was a response to Vienna’s status as a migrant city; about one third of citizens are foreign-born and almost half of the population are first- or second-generation migrants. Therefore, it has been the aim of the City of Vienna to integrate these persons into Austrian society without creating social or ethnic ghettos. Usually, such persons have access to subsidised housing after two years of legal residency. However, to strengthen the access of new citizens to the subsidised housing market, the City of Vienna has also launched a number of “integration housing projects” where 50% of apartments are given to immigrants. In these projects, developers cooperate with NGOs and the Vienna Social Fund (Fonds Soziales Wien). “Interethnische Nachbarschaft” was among the first of these projects.





## Speakers profiles



**Susanne Bauer** started her professional life as the international secretary of a non-profit organisation and worked for a longer period in the sector of demographical change and the ageing society. In 2012, she started working for the City of Vienna in the Housing Research Division. Since 2014, she has been chairing the Eurocities Housing Working Group; since 2016, she has been supporting the activities of the Partnership on Housing in the framework of the EU Urban Agenda. In 2018, she started working for Wiener Wohnen Kundenservice GmbH in the capacity of European Affairs Officer.



**Mark Draeck** joined the UNIDO Headquarters in Vienna in 2010 as an Industrial Development Officer in the Department of Energy and currently manages a project portfolio in clean technology innovation for climate change mitigation and adaptation in Africa, Asia, Europe and Central Asia. He has over 18 years of experience in the field of renewable energy, carbon reduction and climate change mitigation projects and programmes around the world. For the past year, he has also been acting as UNIDO's Thematic Leader on Sustainable Cities; in this respect, he has been working on the Sustainable Cities Strategy as well as managing projects in India and Senegal.



**Domenica Carriero** is the coordinator of the United Smart Cities project and the Energy Efficiency Standards for Buildings project at the Housing and Land Management Unit of the Forests, Land and Housing Division of UNECE. She holds an MBA in Sustainable Business, a Master's Degree in Foreign Languages and a PhD in English Philology. Domenica is specialised in sustainability strategy, sustainability communication and sustainable performance assessment and has served as a consultant for the private sector and start-ups. Her professional expertise includes corporate social responsibility, sustainable development, sustainable housing and disaster risk reduction.



**Sorcha Edwards** is Secretary General at the Brussels Secretariat of Housing Europe, where she is responsible for institutional relations and the overall coordination of the Secretariat's work. At the same time, Sorcha is the face of Housing Europe in Brussels and also serves as the link between the Board and the rest of the organisation's structure.



**Albert Eefting** works for the Housing Department of the City of Amsterdam. For the past 4 years, he has been working on the issue of holiday rentals of private apartments in Amsterdam in his position as Senior Policy Advisor. In this period, Amsterdam has been concerned with developing and implementing a policy on holiday rentals, a topic that has been at the centre of public and political attention. As a policy advisor, Albert Eefting advised the Deputy Mayor for Housing on this topic; he also is part of the team that negotiates with platforms like Airbnb.



**Brian Mark Evans** is Professor of Urbanism and Landscape at the Mackintosh School of Architecture at the Glasgow School of Art and Director of the Glasgow Urban Laboratory. He is a founding director and academician of the Academy of Urbanism, London. He advised the United Nations, Geneva, on cities in the northern hemisphere in preparation for Habitat III, Quito 2016, and is the author, editor and contributor to 20 books and over 80 articles on design, landscape planning and urbanism. He is a chartered town planner and chartered designer and practices, researches, teaches and speaks widely on the contemporary and future city, urbanism, urban design and landscape planning.



**Michael Falzon** studied law at the University of Malta, from where he graduated as a notary in 1989 and as a lawyer in 1991. He also obtained the international qualification as an Associate of the Chartered Institute of Bankers (ACIB). For a number of years, he was the executive head of the bank's legal office. Michael Falzon was politically active in the Malta Labour Party's electoral office as election manager and international secretary. He was also Deputy Leader for Party Affairs and was a candidate in the 2013 and 2017 general elections; in 2017, he was appointed Minister for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity.



**Wolfgang Förster** studied architecture in Vienna and Graz, worked at Wohnfonds Wien from 1988 to 2001 and since then has been Head of the Division for Housing Research and Area Management in the Vienna City Administration, responsible for international contacts. He has long-standing experience in the areas of housing and refurbishment, has worked with a number of international organisations, and as a consultant in various countries holds numerous publications to his name. He is the curator of IBA\_Wien "New Social Housing" and the head of PUSH-Consulting, a Vienna-based private consulting company in the areas of urban planning and housing.



**Daniela Grabmüllerová** is the Director of the International Relations Department and a Deputy of the Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic, where she started working in the 1990s after her practice as an architect and designer. She is responsible for European and international affairs at the Ministry and prepares positions and information papers for international contacts and cooperation partners of the Ministry in its agendas. She is a Vice-Chair of the Bureau of the Committee on Housing and Land Management of UNECE and a member of several academic and scientific councils of Czech universities.



**Kat Grimsley** is the Director of the Masters in Real Estate Development programme at George Mason University. She is responsible for the administration of all aspects of the programme including community building, curriculum management and strategic development. Kat's appointment as Director builds on her unique blend of professional and academic experience with commercial real estate. Kat's ongoing research is related to the topic of global administrative solutions. She is an NAIOP Distinguished Fellow and currently serves as a member of the Real Estate Market Advisory Group for the United Nation's Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Committee on Housing and Land Management.



**Ernst Hauri** was born in 1955. He studied social anthropology at the University of Zurich and graduated with a doctoral degree. In 1987, he started employment with the Swiss federal administration; since 2009, he has been serving as Director of the Federal Office for Housing.



**Klemens Himpele** was born in 1977 in Emmendingen/Germany. He studied economics at the University of Cologne, graduating in 2005. He started his professional career as a researcher for education in Cologne and Berlin. After this, he worked for Statistics Austria in Vienna and for the German Education Union (GEW) in Frankfurt am Main. Since 2012, he has been serving as the Head of Vienna's Municipal Department 23 – Economic Affairs, Labour and Statistics.



**Serhii Komnatnyi** graduated from the Academy of Municipal Management and received a degree in law and in pedagogical sciences. He also graduated from the Private Higher Education Institution "Institute of Ecology, Economics and Law" and received a Master's Degree in International Economics. He started

his career in 2003 as a legal adviser at a private enterprise. Serhii Komnatnyi was appointed head of the specialised financial institution "State Fund for the Promotion of Youth Housing Construction" in accordance with the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of 5 April 2017.



**Brooks Rainwater** is the Senior Executive and Director of the National League of Cities' (NLC) Center for City Solutions. Brooks drives the organisation's research agenda, community engagement efforts and leadership education programming to help city leaders create strong local economies, safe and vibrant neighbourhoods, world-class infrastructure and a sustainable environment. Brooks is an International Advisory Board member for the City of Rotterdam. He also serves on the Board of Directors for STAR Communities and the American Library Association's Public Policy Advisory Council.



**Gulnara Roll** is Secretary of the intergovernmental UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Committee for Housing and Land Management and Head of the Housing and Land Management Unit at the Forests, Land and Housing Division, UN Economic Commission for Europe. UNECE unites 56 countries

from Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia and Northern America. Gulnara's educational background is in human geography and environmental sciences. Prior to joining UNECE in 2009, Gulnara worked in academia and in the management of international programmes on research, spatial planning and regional development in Brussels, Belgium; Tartu, Estonia; and St. Petersburg, Russia.



**Kurt Stürzenbecher** works for the Vienna City Council and is the Chair of the Committee on Housing, Housing Construction and Urban Renewal. He is a member of the Vienna Provincial Parliament and the Vienna City Council as well as Deputy Chairman of the Social Democratic Party for Vienna's 17<sup>th</sup> municipal district Hernals. Since 2013, he has also been serving as Deputy Chairman of the Vienna Socialist Party's group at the City Council and Provincial Parliament.



**György Sümeghy** spent 10 years in public education and later at a private business college. Based on his management experience in education and volunteerism and interest in social development, he joined Habitat for Humanity Hungary as National Director in 2005. György joined HFHI/EMEA in 2013 to lead



regional advocacy initiatives and support national advocacy programmes in the EMEA region. He represents HFHI in Brussels and all over Europe at regional conferences and meetings.



**Elena Szolgayová** is Director General for Housing Policy and Urban Development at the Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development as well as the Chair of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management. She is an architect and urban planner with long-standing research experience who has been advising state and municipal housing policymakers since the early 1990s. In 1999, she joined the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic, recently renamed Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development. She has been involved in numerous UNECE, UN Habitat and EU activities and working groups targeted at housing and urban development and has contributed to several UNECE and research publications related to urban and housing issues.



**Sasha Tsenkova** is Professor of International Development and Planning at the University of Calgary. She holds a Ph.D. in Architecture (Technical University, Prague) and a Ph.D. in Planning (University of Toronto). She specialises in urban planning, housing policy and comparative urban development. Her research and professional activities in these areas for the World Bank, Council of Europe and United Nations include a range of housing and urban projects in more than 20 countries in Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and Central Asia. She is the author of 25 books and research monographs and over 50 articles on urban policy, regeneration, urban sustainability and housing policy.



**Cédric Van Styvendael** began his career as Director of City Policy for Scouts and Guides of France (1998-2002). As such, he was in charge of the development of education and training activities in neighbourhoods. In 2002, he was appointed Regional Director at Habitat et Territoire Conseil, a subsidiary of Union sociale pour l'habitat and Crédit Foncier de France. Cédric Van Styvendael became General Manager of Est Métropole Habitat, a social housing organisation, in April 2009. In 2017, he was appointed President of Housing Europe, a European federation of social housing active in 23 countries.



**Andrey Vasilyev** was appointed Deputy Executive Secretary of UNECE in 2010. He joined the United Nations in 1992 as an advisor to the Secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and then worked as Senior Programme Officer for the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and as Director of UNECE's Technical Cooperation Unit. In 2006, he took over the position of Director of UNECE's Economic Cooperation and Integration Division.



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