

April-May 2005



CECODHAS NEWSFLASH

Comité Européen
de Coordination
de l'Habitat Social

European Liaison
Committee for
Social Housing

Europäischer
Verbindungsausschuß
zur Koordinierung
der Sozialen
Wohnungswirtschaft

European Charter for Housing Approved

With its new 'European Charter for housing', the European Parliament's Urban – housing intergroup address what MEP Alain Hutchinson describes as one of the "core concerns of our fellow citizens."



At a consultation on the charter in February 2005: Vice-President: Alain Hutchinson, MEP, President: Jean Marie Beaupuy, MEP Vice-President: Jan Olbrycht, MEP take note of comments and amendments to the charter from partner organisations.

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The Charter cites 'growing housing exclusion, including severe forms such as homelessness affecting an increasing part of the population, especially in big urban areas' as one of the factors which motivated them to propose the charter which calls for the 'right to accommodation to be established as a fundamental right in the European Union' pointing out that market forces alone do not answer housing needs.

The charter outlines the potential of housing policies to contribute to social, economic and territorial cohesion in the Union. It also stresses that sustainable urban development must be complemented by sustainable housing policies which promote energy efficiency and stem urban sprawl. The charter urges the use of EU funds to renovate social housing.

CECODHAS president, Angelo Grasso welcomed the initiative saying that the charter represents an "important step" which would lead to greater knowledge of the issue at European level and help ensure that housing is taken into account more in the design of EU policies" however he stressed that the subsidiary rule still applies strictly to housing and that this charter makes no attempt to transfer competencies on housing to the European Level. "Housing is, after all, a local issue which is dealt with most effectively at local level."

The next significant step to be taken at the European Parliament is the preparation of an initiative report on housing by the Regional Development Committee. CECODHAS and its Members will be following this initiative closely.

Read the Charter in French and English [here](#).

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Housing and Structural Funds: Negotiations about to be finalised

On May 5th, the Council of Ministers reached an agreement on European Regional development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) spending for the next budgetary period (2007 – 2013). ERDF spending on housing will be eligible in the new Member States, under certain conditions.

To be eligible for ERDF funding for housing, spending must be in the context of an integrated urban development initiative or to upgrade rundown areas or areas threatened by social exclusion. The housing concerned must be multi-family housing destined for low income households. The ERDF funding is available only for housing projects in new Member States.

New Member States can allocate a maximum of 3% of the ERDF allocation to Operational Programmes concerned or 2% of the total ERDF allocation.

This compromise is the result of negotiations between the Council and the European Commission which have been on-going since the European Council introduced the option of using the European Regional Development Fund to finance 'housing project' on December 6th 2005. While new Member States want as much flexibility as possible to decide how to interpret the term 'housing projects', the European Commission wants to limit the spending on housing to interventions which are in line with the goals of the EU cohesion policy. Negotiations to define the exact type of interventions which can be supported are on-going. Urban renewal projects in the EU 15 will remain eligible for support as in 2000-2006.

CECODHAS presents Members activities at the Committee of the Regions Urban Forum



CECODHAS stand at the Committee of the Regions (CoR) Urban Forum (26th & 27th April)

Presenting alongside Cities and European networks (EUROCITIES and Council of European Municipalities and Regions), CECODHAS reminded participants of the important role to be played by housing organizations in sustainable urban renewal using examples of housing refurbishment projects and projects promoting sustainable housing, such as the SHE (Sustainable Housing Europe project ([here](#))).

The forum was an excellent opportunity to raise visibility of CECODHAS and its Members among representatives from local authorities from around Europe.

The forum included a political debate on the Urban Dimension of cohesion policy and the role of cities in its implementation. The debate brought together speakers from the CoR, the European Parliament and the European Commission. Of interest to CECODHAS is news of the establishment of a so-called **interservice group** on urban affairs within the European Commission as announced by the Commissioner responsible for Regional Policy, Danuta Hübner. The establishment of the interservice group is an attempt to develop a more coherent EU urban policy by bringing together representatives from all DGs whose work concerns cities. CECODHAS backs the CoR's proposal that this interservice group should adopt a similar approach to that of the Urban-housing intergroup which gives external experts the opportunity to contribute to the discussions of the group.

Commissioner Hübner also announced a forthcoming **Communication** to follow up on the working paper which launched a consultation on 'Cohesion policies and cities; the urban contribution to growth and jobs in the region'. See the Committee of the Region's opinion on the Working Paper [here](#) and CECODHAS position [here](#).

Also at the exhibition were cities presenting innovative projects. These included the city of Aschersleben which presented their 'Stadt Umbau' 2010 (Urban regeneration 2010) [here](#). Aschersleben is one of a network of 18 cities working on innovative approaches to issues such as depopulation, empty buildings and segregation.

EUROCITIES presented the CARPE project which brings together twelve EUROCITIES members - Paris, Stockholm, Seville, Brussels Capital Region, Lyon, Nantes, Bilbao, Bonn, Vienna, Barcelona, Urban Community of Lille, Oslo - to explore opportunities for adopting social and environmental criteria in their procurement practices [here](#).

Forthcoming CECODHAS Seminar on Urban Renewal, Berlin:

To outline the role of housing association in sustainable urban development with policy debate and best practices from Germany and around Europe, CECODHAS German Member GdW and CECODHAS will hold an International Conference on 'Urban Renewal as a challenge for Housing Associations in Europe' on 31st May in Berlin. Download the programme [here](#).

EU Public Procurement Laws should not hamper cooperation between Local Authorities

The European Parliament's Internal Market Committee gathered experts and representatives of local authorities for a hearing to examine the impact of EU public procurement legislation on joint projects among local authorities. See more [here](#).

Commission releases Communication on Social Services of General Interest

At EU level, the term Social Service of General Economic Interest (SGEI) is understood to mean social services serving the general public interest that are subject to a public service obligations. In recognition of the fact that European legislative initiatives in fields such as competition policy, internal market, public procurement and state aid are difficult to apply to SGEI due to their specific nature, on 26th April, the European Commission published a Communication ([here](#)) on Social Services of General Interest.

The Communication sets out to identify the specific characteristics of Social Services of General Interest and is also a first step in clarifying how EU law relates to them. It includes an analysis of the current community policies on the provision of social and healthcare services and highlights the necessary measures to modernize these services at the community level and in Member states. It also identifies the characteristics of social and healthcare services in different countries.

The Commission is funding a monitoring exercise ([here](#)) to be led by The European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research to improve the knowledge of both operators and the Commission on the situation of services of general interest in the EU and how they are affected by EU legislation. The CECODHAS European Social Housing Observatory is a partner in the project. Based on this monitoring exercise, the Commission will decide if a specific legislative framework is required. All these themes were debated in Vienna on 20 April 2006 at the conference of the Austrian presidency on social services of general interest, during which the Commissioner Vladimir Spidla publicly confirmed that the Commission considered a legislative option on SSGIs in order to limit the legal uncertainty related to the case-by-case approach of the European Court of Justice. CECODHAS was represented at the conference by Secretary General, Claire Roumet and Laurent Ghékière (Rep. L'Union Sociale pour l'Habitat).

Forthcoming Seminar on Social Services:

Together with French Social service providers, CECODHAS French Member L'Union Sociale pour l'Habitat will hold a seminar on the future of Social Services in Europe in Paris on the 30th of May. More info: [here](#)

Background: The European Anti Poverty Network has published a newsletter on Services of General Interest featuring an article on social housing and the Services Directive ([here](#)).

Integration policies not working: EU Commission pledges 1 billion euros

None of the various national policies for integrating immigrants are working well. This is the conclusion of a European Parliament conference on the subject on 25 April. The legal basis for adopting Europe-wide

integration policies is virtually non-existent.

The EU does feel it is its responsibility to assist national and local governments, however. Therefore the European Commission has proposed an EU integration fund for 2007-2013 worth about 1 billion to sponsor local projects and encourage authorities to share best practice.

"The national models have not reaped the fruits we hoped for", EU Justice, Freedom and Security Commissioner Franco Frattini said. The EU fund would "not supplant member state integration funds", he insisted, but could, for example, educate young people to respect the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Mr Frattini is confident the Council of Ministers will agree to the fund of about 1 billion. The Commission originally proposed 1.77 billion but this was trimmed back considerably in the inter-institutional talks on the overall medium-term EU budget.

Source : EUKN

Council of European Development Bank actions on Social Housing

In 2005, the Council of Europe Development Bank granted loans amounting to an all-time high of €2517 million to 42 projects aimed at the improvement of living conditions and promotion of social cohesion in 20 countries. Social Housing is considered as an essential sector needing support.

Since 2001 the Bank has granted €9,7 billion in loans for social housing projects. In 2005, €310,000 million was granted in support of social housing projects in Denmark, Finland and Romania. In Denmark €100 million was granted for the construction of renovation of 1,500 apartments for the elderly. In Finland €70 million was granted for the construction and renovation of housing for groups on low income. In Romania, €140 million was granted for the construction and renovation of 9,500 social housing for groups on low income, in particular young adults (18 – 35). See the Bank's 2005 annual report [here](#).

Together with the UNECE United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the bank has published a report 'Trends and Progress in Housing Reforms in South Eastern Europe' ([here](#)).

News from Members



In an example of a successful public-private-partnership GdW and Berlin Fachhochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft (Berlin School for Science and technology) have inaugurated the first ever German and European Research Institute on housing economy and cooperative law. Visit the website [here](#).

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Building and Social Housing Foundation. Entries to the 2006 World Habitat Awards 2006 must be received by 1st June 2006. Details can be found on the BSHF website [here](#).

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Calls for Proposals/Papers

Intelligent Energy Europe- Programme Info Day and Conference, Brussels, 30th May

Everything you need to know about how to apply for EU funding for projects on energy efficiency in social housing will be presented at the Info Day on 30th May. For those who cannot attend, the sessions can be viewed live on-line.

The 2006 call for proposals - the last under the current IEE programme - will be published in May this year, opening a 5-month period during which European organisations can apply for financial support for their projects. Approximately €50 million will be made available. See the 2006 working programme that will determine the objectives of the call for proposals [here](#). See also the Intelligent Energy Europe-Programme Website [here](#).

'EI-Education' project - example of EU Commission funded project promoting energy efficiency in social housing



Photo: Meeting of on-going SAVE project 'EI education' in Aarhus, Denmark. Partners include CECODHAS Dutch (AEDS) and Danish (BL) Members.

Just one of the SAVE projects which CECODHAS Members are involved in, the 'EI education' project aims to produce an efficient education programme including a practical guidebook for social housing companies to motivate and educate them on how to perform energy efficient retro-fitting.

Visit the 'EI Education' website [here](#). See a full list of on-going SAVE projects [here](#).

Conference: Retrofitting of Social Housing: Financing and Policy Options - Call for Papers

With the Support of CECODHAS, CRES the Greek Centre for Renewable Energy Sources is organizing a conference on 'Retrofitting of Social Housing: Financing and Policy Options'. The conference will be held in Thessaloniki on the 7th & 8th of November before the CECODHAS Executive Committee meeting. Authors willing to make a contribution at the conference should send an abstract to the organizers before June 15th. Topics of interest include 'Experience with existing support incentives for retrofitting of social housing', 'fuel poverty programmes' and 'financial and institution barriers for retrofitting of social housing'. For more information click [here](#) or contact info@cecodhas.org.

Platform to promote exchange of information on the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) launched

A new platform has been established to facilitate communication and information flow amongst all stakeholders and to assist with the early evaluation of the impact of the Directive. The so-called EPBD Buildings Platform will publish a monthly electronic newsletter with the latest information from the website. Visit the website [here](#).

Noticeboard

Partner Search: 'The use of new technologies in the homes of the elderly affected by Alzheimer's disease. Partners needed to join in answer to a call for proposals under the e-Ten programme. Contact: michel.steers@habitat-territoires.com ASAP.

Events

19-20 May 2006, Hannover: 10th International Conference on Passive Housing. More info: [here](#).

22 - 23 May, Bratislava: Tenth Conference on Urban and Regional Research organized by the United

Nations Economic Commission for Europe. More info: [here](#).

30 May 2006, Paris: Fundamental Social Rights, Social Protection and European Integration: The future of Social Services of General Interest: A seminar organized by French social and health service providers. More info: [here](#).

30 May, Brussels: Anti-discrimination and Equal Opportunities organized by the Permanent representation of Austria to the EU. More info: office@akeu.at

30 May, European Neighbours Day: More info: [here](#).

31 May - 2 June 2006, Berlin: CECODHAS Conference: 'Urban Renewal as a challenge for Housing Associations in Europe', CECODHAS Management Board, General Assembly Working Group. More info: [here](#).

1-2 June, Barcelona: Conference on Urban actions in the Structural Funds 2007-2013. More info: [here](#).

1-2 June 2006, Pamplona, Spain: Second International Congress on Architecture, City and Energy. More info: [here](#).

8-9 June 2006, Brussels: Confrontations Conference on the European strategy on services. More info: [here](#).

15 June, London: Sustainable Construction in London: Policy Planning and Implementation organized by the London School of Economics. More info: [here](#).

19-21 June, Vienna: European Social Services Conference: Young and Old in a changing Europe organized by the Austrian presidency of the EU. More info: [here](#).

26-27 June 2006, Vienna: EU housing focal points meeting, Employment in Housing Construction, Renovation and Modernisation - Implementation of the Lisbon Strategy: Organised by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour. More info: [here](#).

2- 3 July 2006, Ljubljana: The ENHR seminar on Housing in an expanding Europe. CECODHAS Observatory Director among key note speakers. [Here](#) for more info.