

Roundtable 1: The Future of Housing

SIAULIAI, 18 SEP 2009, 11:00-12:30h

Moderators: Ms Dovilė Pauplytė/ HUDA (LT); Ms Kathrin Senner/ Ernst Basler+Partner GmbH (DE)

Summary

“The future of housing“ was the theme of one of the roundtable discussions during the WP3-workshop in Siauliai on September 18. Main questions being addressed were:

- What are the key challenges in terms of “future housing“?
- What needs to be done to make the Target Areas (TA) (more) attractive in the future?
- What are the priorities and strategies for the TA concerning “housing“?
- Who is or needs to be involved in the discussion-making process?

The situation of the housing stock varies in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) depending on the particular process of privatisation. The results distinguish due to different conditions for privatising public dwellings within the BSR. And therefore, the rate of privatisation differs clearly in all BSR countries: Estonia – 100%; Latvia – 85%, Lithuania – 97%, Germany – 6%, Poland – 40%¹. This type of privatisation affected all housing sectors. Nowadays, the property relations of the housing stock create certain difficulties when it comes to questions of energy efficient refurbishment of residential buildings with integrated urban development concepts. The main problem is the high rate of private ownership. Regarding energy efficiency refurbishment, it is important to focus not on the individual dwelling but on the whole multi-family building. The challenge was and still is to inform and involve the private home owners and raise their awareness and enhance their financial capabilities to realise energy efficiency measures in the future because the responsibility and authorisation to maintenance their dwellings depends upon the owners’ decisions and (financial) possibilities. These circumstances create the urgent need of reforms for the present housing stock.

The situation of the housing stock is quite similar within the BSR. About 2% of all housing stock is newly built, 98% are old buildings, out of which 90% need to be refurbished. Most of the buildings are in poor conditions, lack of proper management, have inefficient heating systems and engineering equipment, a bad quality of windows and roofs as well as seals between the panels etc. For this reason, it is important to implement energy efficiency measures by supporting the home owners of multi-family buildings. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to put in great efforts. The main efforts, which were tackled in the discussions of roundtable 1, are described in the following:

Political levels

The governments on different political levels (from municipal to national level) should emphasise the importance of modernisation and maintenance of not refurbished buildings by addressing the owners firstly on national level and then on local level. This could be accomplished by creating a national conception for property owners. Thereby, home owners should realise that they are responsible for and in charge of their property.

Financial conditions

¹ BEEN project results



There is an urgent need for governments to establish and/or improve the financial conditions for home owners, e.g. by providing specific loan systems or establishing revolving funds which promote energy efficiency measures. Thereby, home owners could be encouraged and/or enabled to invest in energy efficient refurbishment of their residential buildings.

Communication, involvement and organisational structures

The communication among the different players within the TA needs to be improved. A continuous dialog between governments, municipalities, local leaders and the representatives of home owners associations is the essential basis to implement the approach of energy efficient refurbishment of residential buildings with integrated urban development concepts. Besides, municipalities - with the support of the governments - could initiate e.g. pilot projects to illustrate the possibilities and advantages of the refurbishment of multi-family buildings. Furthermore, the municipalities could support the efficient management for the multi-family buildings and provide assistance on preparing technical documentations for the refurbishment of the buildings. Regular meetings (e.g. monthly) between representatives of home owners associations and municipalities could be hold to discuss difficulties and opportunities on local level, to exchange experiences on this subject. To provide a professional and solid support for the management of multi-family buildings, a building management and operation staff should be appointed, which is well educated and trained on proper maintenance (e.g. by certain certifications). In addition, it is important for municipalities to foresee future adaptation for new solutions and functions of new building designs. This topic among others could be brought up by the municipalities e.g. within the abovementioned regular meetings of all local players.

Home owners

Last but not least, it is essential to address the home owners themselves. They need to realise that energy efficiency is not only a local issue. A change of mentality and lifestyle as well as the recognition of responsibility of ownership are important. Energy efficiency refurbishment has to become a priority for home owners in terms of climate protection on a macro level and improved living conditions and reduced energy cost on an individual level. Municipalities, housing associations and building management, banks and stakeholders should communicate these individual and social impacts of energy efficiency measures to increase the willingness of the home owners to invest in energy efficiency refurbishment measures. Additionally, this could be supported by the election of local leaders, who communicate with municipalities, organise and moderate meetings of all players to discuss problems and exchange opinions and experiences on the implementation of energy efficiency measures.

The future of housing highly depends on the efforts regarding adequate financial conditions for home owners, increased communication on different political levels, raised awareness and greater involvement of home owners.

