

# European Alliance Against Coronavirus

Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2020 at 8:30

## A collaborative approach to Social Housing

Working format is based on “*Gilles Rules*”:

1. conceptual framework
2. needs and disruptions
3. solutions

Speakers:

- Mathilde Gauss, Kaleidoscoop
- Jon Ansoelaga, Basque Cluster Eraikune
- Sorch Edwards, Housing Europe
- Kim van Sparrentak, European Parliament

[Link to session's recording](#)

### 1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### [The importance of social housing for Europe](#)

Ulla Engelmann opened this session with a general overview of the social housing sector and its potentials. She underlined the **role played by social housing in the renovation wave for Europe**. Indeed, social housing acts as a **laboratory for improvement of skills and regulation** around digitalisation, sustainable funding, and collaborations with local authorities, and touches various industrial ecosystems: construction, social and proximity, and renewable energy.

Kim van Sparrentak, Member of the European Parliament, is aware of the problems faced by the local authorities in the inclusion of vulnerable communities and areas with social problems, but she remarked that **everyone has the right to have acceptable housing**. Social housing is part of a just transition, especially because of our current affordability crisis. The European Union could set a framework for the local authorities.

#### [The urban projects by Kaleidoscoop](#)

Kaleidoscoop, presented by Mathilde Gauss, is a great example to see how a private initiative – which works together with the public sector on shared premises in Strasbourg – can contribute to the development of the social and solidarity economy within the territory. The “Deux rives” urban project wants to give its district **a global vision by engaging its community into the development and respecting the district's history**. Kaleidoscoop might have only moved into the old COOP site in the Rhine Port area in 2020, but the project is already well

underway and - as Mathilde Gauss reported - 400,000 m<sup>2</sup> are dedicated to economic activities. The association plays a leading role in the district by **boosting cooperation** and **involving inhabitants**.

### Social Housing for a just energy transition

For Sorcha Edwards, **social housing is a perfect vehicle to combine green values, innovation, and quality**. Social housing can be connected to the sustainability goals and energy efficiency, as shown by the examples of Jon Ansoleaga. Housing should be accessible and meet social challenges but can also lead the energy transition. Indeed, the new energy technologies bring a unique opportunity to further empower communities by introducing locally generated decentralized sustainable and clean energy source. Ideally, citizens and communities should be assisted to organize and educate themselves about local possibilities and the fair use of their energy resources.

How can the recovery plan boost social housing? Sorcha Edwards prefers a split of 50 % subsidies and 50 % loans.

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## 2. IDENTIFICATION OF DISRUPTIONS

### First disruption: rising importance of sustainability paradigm in Social Housing sector

*Source: All the speakers underlined the importance of this topic*

**Evidence:** Speaking about social housing, it is necessary to distinguish between: (i) social housing (typically rental housing at below market prices); (ii) affordable housing (typically below, but closer to, the market's rents or housing built to be sold at an "affordable price"); and (iii) cooperative housing (owned and managed by residents groups or non-profit groups). Social housing can also concern the conversion of abandoned structures and places, with the aim of creating new places accessible for the community. The main goals, among many, are to boost cooperation and accessibility, involving inhabitants, support needs of societies, enable sustainable development for societies (e.g. energy efficiency and *Near Zero Energy Building*). Social housing has a great importance in Europe, that boasts more than 43,000 local housing organisations, 25 million dwellings, roughly 200,000 new dwellings completed per year, over 50 billion € in new investment per year, more than 7,500 staff employed directly by the federations and more than 300,000 staff employed by local housing providers.

The housing sector represents one of the main sectors in terms of environmental impact (in several regions this sector consumes too much). For this reason, the achievement of sustainability objectives in this field is a crucial point for societies green transition. It is necessary to take advantage of the funds already available (Green Deal) to enable projects that foster the transition (e.g. lower housing consumption, renewable energy for housing sector, energy efficiency, zero-impact building, and others).

**Geographical impact:** EU

**Stage of value chain:** buildings, places and infrastructures usage

**Character of the disruption:** sustainability impact within Social Housing sector

**Time frame:** mid and long term

**EU actions needed:**

- **Regulation:** Social Housing is not a European competence. However, Europe can give local authorities a framework. Europe can take the rights of Social Housing and enable better places to live. Local authorities often suffer lack of funds to feed social housing and, even if social housing companies are very innovative, funding is not available.
- **Funding:** Funds for Social Housing investment within Recovery Plan. Grants and Public investments need.

**Recommendations:**

- The COVID-19 crisis has curbed many new projects in social housing, but it is important to underlined that the economic crisis is not the only priority. It is essential that the environmental crisis is also a priority and, for this, social housing can make a difference. Both recoveries should be aligned, as together they have big potential.
- There is often a difference between urban and rural areas. People prefer to live in the city, but environmental problems are increasing (pollution, consumption, etc.). Rural areas also need to become more attractive to decongest urban areas.
- Smart cities paradigm and digitalization can improve the quality of life in urban areas and more sustainable cities management.

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## IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS

- 1) Grants and Public Funds to support projects in Social Housing, especially for sustainability projects
- 2) Europe could take rights to manage Social Housing
- 3) Difficulty in ensuring quality and integrated approach in district-based renovation due to current lack of capacity/skills usage of EU procurement framework
- 4) Stability & Growth Pact can be a limit to investment due to on-balance classification of some social housing providers, which is a brake on investment for both renovation and new building