In memoriam Rob van der Leij Sr

On June 24, Rob van der Leij Sr, passed away. Rob was initiator of the predecessor of the European Federation for Living, in 2006 established as the Dutch-German Connection. His idea to strengthen the cooperation between social housing organizations and companies in the chain of real estate development, in order to learn from each other and thus better perform, has been practiced on a European scale since that year.

After renaming to EFL, Rob chaired the organization until November 2010. Rob was a very energetic and willfull man. A networker pur sang with strong views on housing policy, taking many initiatives in the field of social housing and regional urban development. Apart from leading his own construction company ‘Van der Leij Group’, Rob was socially active in enhancement of chances of poor people in third world countries. He founded his own ‘Van der Leij Foundation’, the later “Intervolve Foundation’, which supported the realization of low cost dwellings and local services for the poorest people in India, South Africa, Cameroun and Ethiopia. He used successful his extensive network to co-finance these projects. His foundation won twice the ‘Developer of the year Award’ of South Africa. Rob has been decorated as Officer in the Order of Orange Nassau. EFL owes Rob as founding father a lot, he used all his energies and contacts to develop the organization and we will miss an important source of inspiration.

August 2015

Ben Pluijmers, Chairman EFL
Joost Nieuwenhuijzen, Managing Director EFL

Lisbon conference ENHR

The European Network for Housing Research (ENHR) hosted a major conference from 28 June to 1 July in Lisbon, Portugal. The conference was held under the theme ‘Housing and Cities in a time of change: are we focusing on People?’. Gerard van Bortel of EFL associated partner TU Delft held a presentation on July 1 on a forthcoming ENHR/ EFL book project. He presented an idea for a joint research project, focussed on innovations in governance structures. The proposal contains research in innovations in affordable housing finance and governance structure and to discuss pros and cons of these developments. It will lead to explore the transferability of innovations; to investigate interrelations between finance and governance and to compare and contrast developments.
EFL Zero Carbon House, “a pragmatic approach for defining a market-driven sustainable solution”

In collaboration with leading social housing companies from different European countries – Eigen Haard (NL), Circle Housing (UK), Moat (UK), and Gebowag (GE) – Keoto (CH) develops the EFL Zero Carbon House, a market-driven solution for providing high quality social housing with minimum environmental impact. The LOI’s have been signed on June 10 by Hugh Fenn (MOAT), Lara Hayim (Circle), Snezana Michaelis (GEWOBAG) and Jan Jeths van den Berg (Eigen Haard).

The partnering companies work together through the consortium of the European Federation for Living (EFL).

The development of EFL Zero Carbon House is based on Keoto’s Full Zero Concept, a robust strategy aiming to reduce CO2 emissions over the building’s life cycle, considering: (a) building-related energy use (heating, cooling, hot water and lighting), (b) embodied energy of construction materials, and (c) energy produced by the building – summarized in the formula:

operational energy use + embodied energy = life cycle energy production (a + b = c)

By focusing on achieving an energetic balance, instead of defining specific energy use limits (as traditionally suggested by European standards), the Full Zero Concept seeks the most cost-effective ways of minimizing CO2 emissions over the buildings’ lifecycle. More specifically, by the last quarter of 2015, the initial design phase EFL Zero Carbon House will result in conceptual designs for three different typologies: green field developments in the Netherlands, single-family homes in the UK, and inner city apartments in Germany. Each one of the three initial typologies integrates a unique architectural concept, the optimal definition of construction parameters, and a CO2-free energetic concept.

The ambitious project undertaken by EFL partners, is led by Keoto, a Swiss Tech company supported by the latest innovations from ETH Zurich. During the process, TU Delft provides perspective and overview of the project development.

With such multidisciplinary team and its holistic approach, EFL Zero Carbon House is set to become a design icon, not only in terms of its environmental performance, but also because of the seamless integration of technical systems and architecture.
New member – Sergic

EFL is very pleased to welcome the French company ‘Sergic’ to the network. The company applied for an associated membership in May of this year. Sergic is a multi channel Real Estate company based in Paris, composed of a network of 30 agencies specialized in the real estate businesses: property management, leasing, building management and brokery services. Since it’s founding in 1963, it has been developed into one of the largest real estate companies in France.

Since the beginning, the company builds their reputation on rigor, expertise, transparency but also on listening skills to the aims of their clients, spirit of service and desire to surpass themselves for their accompany. Today they figure as a leading group of French real estate. EFL looks forward to an effective cooperation with Sergic and is proud to offer the company great opportunities to extend their business across Europe.

Upcoming EFL Conference
November 18th - 20th in Amsterdam

The European Federation for Living (EFL), Europe’s only network of key providers of accessible housing, scientific institutes and companies in the value chain of housing, holds it’s next Conference from 18th until 20th November in Amsterdam.

The conference, themed ‘An invitation to innovation’ offers an excellent opportunity to meet members and associates of EFL, to get a real proof how cooperation with the major players in European Housing benefits organisations and what the advantages of sharing know how in the housing industry are.

The EFL conference will be an attractive occasion to share experiences, to get in touch and share views with colleagues across several countries and to learn from experts and academics in the field of housing, ICT, sustainable buildings, finance, governance and innovation.

EFL is currently putting together a high level key-note programme. The programme will offer a variety of plenary and parallel sessions and an educational field visit in Amsterdam. The conference will cover many cross-cutting issues such as innovation driven by technological developments, innovation in governance, latest EU policies related to innovation and provide information about EU Grant programs for the housing sector.

The meeting will be hosted by the Amsterdam housing organisation “Eigen Haard”, one of largest players in Dutch social housing. www.ef-l.eu
EFL hosted Study visit Amsterdam for German Housing Companies from Cologne

In the first week of July EFL hosted a three-day visit in Amsterdam by a delegation of housing corporations from Cologne, Germany. The group, consisting of 50 representatives on Board and senior management level, enjoyed a very interesting afternoon in the Amsterdam ‘Indian neighbourhood’ where Eigen Haard organized an informative tour and took the opportunity to show their achievements in the neighbourhood. Both on July 1 and 2, EFL organized two seminars with speakers addressing the guests on several topics. The CEO of the ‘Zaanse’ housing company “Parteon” Cees van Boven explained the governance changes within his organisation. Many Dutch social housing providers move from a traditional focus on maintenance and development of social housing, towards a policy of Asset Management. Parteon is one of the leading companies in this respect, keen to learn from foreign examples like in Germany. Elke Heidrich, housing director at Eigen Haard, provided profound information about the neighbourhood policy applied in their districts.

On Thursday July 2nd, Prof Vincent Gruis of TU Delft and Joost Nieuwenhuijzen, EFL’s managing director, introduced the German guests into the political and governmental developments in Dutch housing policy. The group received also an in depth profile presentation about the EFL network and its output in recent years. The third presentation, delivered by IT specialists from the Amsterdam housing company ‘De Alliantie’, provided a insight in the use of technological IT developments to create an internet (and client) driven housing company.

Design Competition Accessible Housing

The European Federation for Living (EFL) is hosting a design competition for architecture and design students, requesting stimulating, innovative ideas in the field of new-build accessible housing for the elderly. As by 2060, over half of the European population will be past retirement age, the need for adequate housing for elderly is huge and nowhere sufficient to meet future demands. EFL and its partner ARA from Finland likes to play a role in this challenges by delivering new ideas for affordable housing for elderly, but also equipped for people with physical restraints. Entrants of the competition are encouraged to think broadly about the needs of the ageing population and the issues of accessibility. The participating universities derive from Finland, Germany, France, Belgium and the Netherlands. The Finnish governmental organisation ARA provides a 10,000 € award for the winning entrance. The prize award ceremony will take place in Spring 2016 (Helsinki).
The team is also helping customers to understand how much energy they use in their home. Through monitoring equipment the housing providers will be able to see which appliances use the most energy, how much they consume and how long they are used for. Tenants will be supported to understand this information and how much it costs to use those appliances. Based on the knowledge, it is expected to help customers to reduce the appliances they use, save energy and save money. More info on http://www.i-stay-home.eu.

I-stay@home project finalized during Brussels conference

On Wednesday June 24 the I-stay@home (ICT solutions for an ageing society) partnership and the Representation of the Free State of Bavaria to the European Union organized their final event in Brussels. During the event, the outcomes and findings of the project with respect to providing independence through technology to elderly people were presented to more than 100 attendees. The scientific evaluation of the project seems to indicate that the use of I-stay@home-technology can improve quality of life, particularly with socially isolated tenants with moderate income and education. Gender and immigrant status seem to be less significant factors. Furthermore, this research indicates that tenants fitting a particular demographic profile face only minor challenges in implementing ICT to significant benefit. There is therefore a large target group with significant market opportunities.

TRIME: Trias Mores Energetica

TRIME is a pan-european project to help social housing customers reduce their energy use – helping to save money and live a healthier lifestyle. The team is also helping customers to understand how much energy they use in their home. Through monitoring equipment the housing providers will be able to see which appliances use the most energy, how much they consume and how long they are used for. Tenants will be supported to understand this information and how much it costs to use those appliances. Based on the knowledge, it is expected to help customers to reduce the appliances they use, save energy and save money.

http://www.trime-eu.org
EFL / EU FUNDED PROJECTS

PROJECT OPTIMISER

French expertise institute Nobatek has asked EFL to be the main dissemination partner in the project ‘OPTIMISER’, a new Horizon 2020 Call on energy savings. EFL members Vilogia (Lille, France) and TU Delft (Netherlands) will become fully involved in the project. The focus of the project lies on improving the energy efficiency of existing buildings through a combined approach of planned renovations and energy efficiency measures. OPTIMISER will pioneer an innovative, incremental approach to delivering the deep energy efficient retrofit of an entire Social Housing Organisation’s housing stock as an integral part of their overall asset management strategy. The result of the application of the project OPTIMISER is expected in the second half of 2015.

Goverance, Management & Finance – INTERREG NWE

During the first bi-annual EFL conference in Dartford, professor Vincent Gruis and Gerard van Bortel (both TU Delft) chaired a workshop on ‘Governance, Management and Finance’. As a result of this workshop, a draft proposal for INTERREG NWE has been written by Gerard van Bortel. This project wants to support innovations in the provision of affordable housing targeted at vulnerable groups which face (the risk of) social and economic exclusion. Making use of the different states of innovation capacity across the NWE region, the project aims to transfer new and tested state of the art technology, develop effective and efficient forms of cross-sectoral partnerships to provide affordable housing solutions for populations that are excluded or at risk of exclusion. This will result in the realisation of an European Living Lab for innovations in Service Delivery in residential social property. The project is not only focussed on delivering service delivery innovations, but also on removing organisational and regional barriers that impede innovations.
Social Domain

On June 25 and 26 the Working Group Social Domain/CSR met in Paris, where ICF Habitat hosted a successful two-day program filled with lectures and a field visit to ICF-managed dwellings in residential district Porte de la Chapelle. A special guest to the meeting was Barbara Steenbergen, Head of liaison office of the International Union of Tenants to the EU. She held an inspiring presentation in which she elaborated on the different dimensions of responsible housing and shared some interesting facts about the International Union of Tenants. Within a short time the Topic Group will put out a brochure that includes all the findings of the meeting with regard to best practices of Social Corporate Responsibility (CSR) and neighborhood management.

The next meeting takes place between November 25 and 26 in the Italian city of Bolzano. During this meeting, the working group will work out a common EFL/Eurhonet tool for the measurement and improvement of the efforts of housing organisations in community investments. Community investment is at the heart of housing associations’ work. It is in the building and maintaining of good quality affordable homes and through the vast range of community programmes which respond to local needs and help build resilient communities.

Chairman of the group: Bernadette Arends 
barends@de-woonplaats.nl
The Topic Group Energy Efficiency has been actively exploring new ways to increase energy efficiency with low investments. The next meeting of the Topic Group, which will be another combined meeting with the Topic Group EU Subsidies, will be hosted by EFL associated partner ISTA on September 10 in Essen, Germany. The theme of the meeting is “Insights in household energy use”. Key experts from ISTA, EBZ Bochum, TU Delft and Ritterwald will lead several workshops on the topic. More info and the agenda on the EFL website: www.ef-l.eu

Chairman of the group:
Henk Visscher (H.J.Visscher@tudelft.nl)

EU Subsidies
The past couple of meetings of the Topic Group EU Subsidies were successfully combined to form a joint meeting with the Topic Group Energy Efficiency. The Topic Group has been very active in following the trends with regard to political changes on a European Level and stresses the EU’S objectives with reference to the energy strategy. The newly introduced ‘Juncker Plan’ will induce a big change of policy. The Topic Group aims to gather all the insights on the impact of the Juncker Plan for project opportunities for our target group.

Chairman of the group:
Pierre Touya, (touya.p@polylogis.fr)

Finance
The next meeting of the Topic Group ‘Finance / Financial Instruments’ takes place on 16 October at Vilogia’s head office in Lille. The Topic Group is currently developing a tool with which EFL members will be able to compare the main financial KPI’s in the (affordable) housing industry. For Eigen Haard, GEWOBAG and Circle, both balance and non balance sheet figures have been collected. Next step will be to add figures from other EFL members, including Vilogia as hosting organisation of the next meeting.

A further in depth comparison and learning from each other’s financial policy is scheduled for the near future.

Chairman of the group:
Stephan Bachhuber (Stephan.Bachhuber@hypoport.de) and Paul Rickard (paulrickard@paragonCHG.co.uk)
**New Statutes**

The European Federation for Living recently embarked on a process of construing new statutory texts. In November of 2014, during the EFL Conference in Paris, the General Assembly appointed a commission composed of Michaela Lüdtke (1892 Berlin) and Mieke van den Berg (Eigen Haard) to investigate the opportunities for legal amendment. The idea for a statutory change arose out of a sense that the everyday practice of EFL should be well displayed in all its legal documents. During the last years EFL underwent some important organisational changes, including the distinction between members and associated partners. Due to the increasing number of members and the general growth of EFL over the years, it was found that an update was in place. The new statutes are expected to be ready by the end of 2015.

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**EXTERNAL NEWS**

**German Rental Brake/ Mietpreisbremse**

Since the start of July, 22 German municipalities have applied for the so called ‘Rental Brake’, a controversial initiative from the German federal government initiated by the social-democratic SPD party. Before July 22, the rent could be as high as desired, when a new rental contract was concluded. According to the Consumer Protection Ministry it comes in booming cities yet to price rises by 20, 30 or even 40 percent for new leases. With the rent brake these price hikes will be capped: For new leases, the rent may in the future be not exceed more than 10% above the level of the local comparative rent. This is to prevent that rents rise to rapid and low- and average income households are displaced from popular residential areas. The law is not obligatory for the whole of Germany. Individual ‘Bundesländer’ may decide to implement it or not. The law is not valid for new constructed dwellings.

Chairman of the FDP-Niederrhein party and member of parliament Dietmar Brockes fears that the Rental Brake will do more harm than good. ‘Potential property developers are scared away and investments in the housing market are restrained’, he criticizes. Rising rents were the result of growing demand at constant supply. ‘Instead of the rental brake we need incentives for residential construction, Brockes says.

However, not everyone seems to be negative about the short-term impacts of the Rental Brake. To some, including Jan Hebecker, Director Data & Markets at the online housing portal Immobilienscout24, it is clear that the Rental Brake is already serving its purpose. ‘In major cities, in which the Rental Brake has not yet been introduced, the rents continue to rise,” he says. In Frankfurt, rents went 0.1% upward in June. In Duesseldorf they remained constant and in Munich they were down by 0.1%.
UK Welfare Reform “Pay to Stay”

In the UK, higher income earners who live in social housing will no longer be able to claim taxpayer-funded subsidies for their rent under the new welfare reform. This is announced by George Osborne, Chancellor of the Exchequer of the newly elected English government.

The “Pay to Stay” measure, which will form part of the Chancellor’s attempts to slash the Government’s welfare bill by £12bn, will scrap benefits for some 350,000 people who live in housing association and local authority properties. The “pay to stay” scheme for tenants in social housing is forcing anyone earning just £30,000 to pay a higher rent to stay in their home (or £40,000 in London).

The justification for this policy is that social tenants benefit from a subsidized rent. Social landlords don’t usually keep information on their tenants’ income and they have not yet managed to implement the government’s previous policy which set the maximum income for social tenants at the much more generous £60,000.

Cuts to housing benefits and the overall benefit cap will mean that more poor people will be excluded from social housing altogether. The evidence is growing that housing associations are beginning to exclude the very people they were set up to house in the first place. The extension of the right to buy to tenants of housing associations will reduce further social housing numbers.

For the past five years, housing associations and local authorities have been able to charge market rents to those on incomes of more than £60,000 (€84,048). The Treasury will recoup the additional rental income that local authorities receive, which will be used to reduce the deficit and generate extra income for housing associations to reinvest in affordable housing.

New Housing Act in the Netherlands

The Dutch government recently published the new Housing Act. The new legislation for the social housing sector will be gradually put into force in 2016 and aims at clarifying the status and role of social housing organisations after they had become financially independent from the state in the ‘90s.

Since then social housing providers started having a wider social role and more entrepreneurial freedom. Neighbourhood activities and care services were added in their mission while they started investing in middle segment rental and home ownership, too. According to the European Commission the separation between social and other activities was not clear enough. Furthermore, the Commission restricted some social activities and required to lower the income ceiling for social housing to remain Services of General Economic Interest (SGEIs) and eligible to state aid. On top of that some incidents of miss-management in the recent years put the sector in the firing line leading to a parliamentary inquiry.

This rather complicated background created the need for a new Housing Act that consists of 6 main pillars:

1. Definition of Core Tasks
2. Definition of other- non SGEI- tasks
3. Performance agreements with local authorities and tenant organisations
4. Separation of SGEI and non SGEI activities
5. Governance
6. External Supervision and Emergency Fund

(source: Housing Europe)
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Editor: European Federation for Living.
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