Dear Reader,

The new year has started very successful for EFL. On the first place we welcomed four new members and associates to our European network, extending the number of countries to 10 with 40 members/associates. The new entries derive from Denmark and Bulgaria as new countries, furthermore from Finland and the Netherlands. We are very glad to present you the organization profiles of BO-VEST Housing Association from Denmark, Housing Association Settlemennassunnot from Helsinki, 3 D Geo Solutions - a great innovative company from the Netherlands - and last but not least, the New Bulgarian University of Sofia.

Another great news is success of the EFL/ARA Student Design Competition on Accessible Housing. We have a winner! After an intensive jury discussion on February 15 with internationally renowned experts in accessible housing, the best project has been elected. A major success for the Finnish organization ARA and EFL, who received more than 30 entries from 4 countries. The award ceremony will take place in Helsinki at May 12. In this Newsletter you find an extensive summary on the topic of refugee housing and the role of social housing organizations. EFL consultant Margot Hervé performed an investigation on the different policies among some of the EFL countries, which you will read in the latter part of the Newsletter.

In summary, we hope we have composed another interesting Newsletter and wish you a happy reading!

Kind regards,

Ben Pluijmers
Joost Nieuwenhuijzen

February 2016

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Texts and pictures: Margot Hervé and Joost Nieuwenhuijzen
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Ben Pluijmers, Chairman EFL
Joost Nieuwenhuijzen, Managing Director EFL
UPCOMING EFL CONFERENCE HELSINKI

The next EFL conference, hosted by ARA, will take place in Helsinki from 11 to 13 May 2016. The theme of the conference will be the European ageing population and accessible housing. As generally viewed as one of the major societal developments in Europe, the ageing population offers great challenges for the housing industry. It is urgent to develop new-build accessible housing for the elderly, as by 2060, half of the European population will be past retirement age. During the Conference, prizes of the ARA/ EFL Student Design Competition on accessible housing will be awarded. A first overview of students’ projects is already available on the EFL website. In addition, workshops, key-note speakers and site visits are planned. As announced during the conference in Amsterdam, a speed dating between EFL members and associates will be organized.

JURY EFL/ ARA STUDENT DESIGN COMPETITION ELECTED THE WINNING ENTRIES

During a meeting at the TU Delft, a jury consisting of experts in accessible housing assessed a total number of 31 competition entries. The jury members included Eckhard Feddersen from Germany (Feddersen Architects), Renée Floret Scheide, architect from France, Kirsti Pesola from Finland and Jeremy Porteus from England; director of Housing Lin. From the organizing committee, Kaisu Kammonen, Sampo Vallius both from the Finnish organization ARA, Jacqui Rennie from Habinteg housing association and Joost Nieuwenhuijzen from EFL completed the jury. The jury had a hard job to decide which entry was actually the best, and which ones were the number 2 to 6. The quality of the entries was very high! After a full day of comparing, giving points to each individual project and at the end convincing each other about the number 1, the jury succeeded in harmony. The award ceremony is scheduled during the EFL Conference in Helsinki, for which both the winning teams and the jury will be invited.
NEW EFL MEMBERS AND ASSOCIATES

BO-VEST (DENMARK - MEMBER)

EFL is very pleased to welcome the Danish housing association BO-VEST in the network. Leading housing organization in West Copenhagen (municipalities of Brøndby, Albertslund, Ishøj and Greve), BO-VEST holds 10,500 rental units. It is a great opportunity for the EFL network to welcome our first member from Denmark. Ulrik Brock Hoffmeyer (Bo-Vest CEO) has already had the chance to attend the EFL conference in Paris and the topic group Finance in London. One of the missions of BO-VEST is to encourage the active participation of tenants in their neighborhood life thanks to volunteering programs. The housing association is also interested in energy efficient housing.

www.bo-vest.dk

SETLEMTTIASSUNNOT OY (FINLAND - MEMBER)

Setlementtiassunnot Oy is a Finnish housing organization founded in 2000 and located in Helsinki. The company owns 1,000 rental units and 400 “right-of-occupancy” apartments. This type of tenureship is between traditional rental and homeownership. The main advantages of the “right-of-occupancy” are the financial safety, the small payment at first and the lease without time limit. Setlementtiassunnot Oy focuses on dwellings for low income people, single applicants, people in the priority list and special groups in need of assistance. The housing organization aims to support tenants that is why a community worker is present in every housing block to support residents in their daily-life.

www.setlementtiassunnot.fi

3D GeoSolutions

3D GEO SOLUTION (NETHERLANDS - ASSOCIATE)

The Dutch engineering office 3D Geo Solutions applied successfully to become associate partner. The company services include 3D measuring, 3D modelling and animation. 3D Geo solutions transforms objects into 3D models with classification (e.g. BIM) in order to provide useful information for asset management. The company’s 3D system is operational for buildings, landscapes and below the ground (pipes and conduits). 3D Geo Solutions also developed an open source 3D platform (GloBLD) for managing and controlling the spatial planning in accordance with CityGML standard. For instance, the company already worked with the EFL associate partner Van Der Ley Group in their concept “Urgent Wonen”, a solution for flexible and low cost housing for refugees and other purposes.

http://www.3dgeosolutions.nl (Dutch ) or in English (http://account901.wix.com/engels )

NEW BULGARIAN UNIVERSITY (SCIENTIFIC PARTNER)

The New Bulgarian University has recently been accepted as new scientific partner. New Bulgarian University is an autonomous liberal education institution dedicated to the advancement of university education by offering accessible and affordable opportunities for interdisciplinary and specialized education and research of high quality. The Department of Architecture at the New Bulgarian University has 260 students taught in MSc in Architecture. Within EFL, NBU is represented by Prof. Georgi Georgiev. NBU is a leading entity in Bulgaria in the field of sustainable urban and housing research, urban resilience etc. Since 2014 a new MSc Course in Housing Policy has started based on the experience gained by NBU staff through participation in various national and EU supported projects in energy efficiency and sustainable housing. Recently a Centre for Sustainable Urban and Housing studies is established in order to foster the further expansion of urban and housing related research at NBU. Their expertise includes:
- Energy efficiency retrofit of condominium housing
- Urban regeneration and quality of life in Bulgarian big cities
- Housing supply systems and housing markets
- Housing finance systems
- Regulatory framework of urban environment
- Resilient cities etc.

http://www.nbu.bg/enw
EFL/EU FUNDED PROJECTS

INNOVATION PORTAL FOR IMPROVED AFFORDABLE HOUSING TENANCY AND ESTATE MANAGEMENT

EFL in partnership with TU Delft and EBZ Bochum is working on a proposal for INTERREG 2014-2020 North-West Europe. The project objective is to develop an innovative portal with IT based solutions for improved affordable housing tenancy and estate management. It aims to solve a major problem in the housing sector: innovations are not shared among social housing providers. At the same time sharing knowledge and experiences is essential to meet current challenges (digital revolution, demographic changes, energy efficiency). This project aims to support and accelerate the adoption of innovations in tenancy and estate management in the affordable housing sector, and thus contribute actively to the reduction of disparities in innovation capacity in Northwest Europe. In fact, the project is particularly focused on bridging the gap in digitization and frontline systems between European social landlords. The online portal would be completed by a mobile app to support interactions between landlords, supply chain partners and residents. Promotion of quality of service delivery, making use of new developments in communication and customer satisfaction are some the goals of this project. Today, EFL members like Wheatley Group, Eigen Haard, Parteon and Volkshaard provided further ideas for the project.

TRIME: FINDINGS ABOUT SOCIAL HOUSING RESIDENTS’ ATTITUDE TOWARDS ENERGY EFFICIENT LIVING.

TRIME is a pan-European project with a runtime from 2014 to 2017 with the aim to help social housing residents to reduce their energy consumption and save money at the same time. This project is co-funded by the European Union via the FP7 funding program. U-Sentric, a Belgian company providing insights and expert solutions that guarantee a rewarding user experience to customers, became a TRIME partner and analyzed influences on social housing residents’ behavior in relation to their energy saving and energy efficiency. A number of qualitative interviews have been conducted in the Netherlands, UK, Belgium and Spain. TRIME partners Vilorgia (France), Logirep (France), Havensteder (the Netherlands), Eigenhaard (the Netherlands), Circle housing (UK), Zonnige Kempen (Belgium) and Sestao Berri (Spain) participated in the study.

In summary, the report shows that residents are often well equipped with the latest technology, despite their low income. In addition, residents often relate energy with money, money saving being one of their main concerns. Consequently, they generally have a positive attitude towards energy-efficiency. Many participants measure their energy consumption by duration, heat, rapidity, frequency of use, wattage, biases and age of the appliance.

However, U-Sentric also reveals the barriers of social housing residents to save energy such as the lack of knowledge about energy efficiency and sometimes lack of interest about energy efficiency even though people have knowledge about it. Some people also fear a change of their habits or changes in their lives in general. Furthermore, when residents think about saving energy, it is often only related to heating and lighting and not to the use of household appliances. Finally, participants are focused on other aspects when buying a product, such as price, design or features. Other barriers to reduce energy consumption are related to poor housing quality such as draughty windows, single glazing, no ventilation, floor not being insulated or old heating systems.

Overall, one of the main goals in the TRIME project is to reduce an average of 11% in energy consumption. In order to influence residents’ behavior, U-Sentric developed a list of advice. Thereby, the keys to reduce the energy use of social housing residents seem to be:
- Bring awareness and enthuse people to act,
- Provide information and knowledge to residents,
- Convince residents that by reducing their energy consumption, they will be able to save money,
- Inspire residents to act by creating a desire to change,
- Support residents to make the changes they have made sustainable.
EFL/EU FUNDED PROJECTS

BOOK PROJECT: NEXT STEPS
During the EFL conference in Amsterdam, the scientific book project “affordable housing governance and finance across Europe: innovations and comparative perspectives” has been launched. Since then, the book structure and content have been approved and cross-national writing teams have been established. Abstracts for each chapter are written right now. The editorial team (TU Delft and EFL) will give feedback to authors within a month. Next steps: write first drafts of chapters, develop the book proposal and find a publisher. First drafts will be discussed during the ENHR conference in Belfast (28th June – 1st July 2016).

EFL TOPIC GROUPS

EFL topic groups are composed by experts deriving from EFL member organisations. Each topic group is centered around a theme or a set of connecting themes and chaired by an EFL member. The topic groups are a central element of EFL, providing direct opportunities to share knowledge, benchmark and develop projects together.

TOPIC GROUP ENERGY EFFICIENCY
The topic group Energy efficiency will meet on April 19, in Delft. This next meeting will be a one day program focused on Net Zero Energy Renovations.

In the Netherlands, the national program Energiesprong has initiated in recent years a new concept for renovation of social and private houses to net zero dwellings (“0-on-the-meter”). Some projects have already been realized and many others are being developed. The concept consists of innovative techniques for insolation, efficient heating and renewable energy generation, the use of prefabricated elements, short renovation processes, integrated building processes, new financial models and energy use performance guarantees. Some experts involved in these projects will be invited to give presentations about their experiences. Also, EFL member Van der Ley Construction, involved in the development of these projects, will present their experiences. After the presentations, EFL members and associates will have the opportunity to discuss about the pros and cons of the concept and the will be introduced about comparable projects in other countries. The agenda will be available on the EFL website.

Chairman of the group:
Henk VISSCHER (H.J.Visscher@tudelft.nl)
**TOPIC GROUP ACCESSIBLE HOUSING**

The topic group Accessible Housing met on February 10 in the German city of Nuremberg. With the finish of the Award competition in sight, the group managed to find new projects and will also finalize a glossary with legal requirements of accessible housing across Europe. With this instrument, EFL provides in a flash a clear overview about the technical requirements of elderly housing. Furthermore the group decided to take up new projects. Although it still has to be decided, the following ideas have been expressed:

- Standards for transformation existing housing into accessible housing
- Use of BIM technologies for refurbishment: create a library of solutions for adapting homes
- Transnational comparison Financing systems accessibility across Europe
- Combining energy efficiency and accessibility
- Possible EU funding for an exchange project

Chairman Topic Group: Donald Orr, Habinteg Housing Association (dorr@habinteg.org.uk)

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**TOPIC GROUP SOCIAL DOMAINT**

We are very pleased to inform you about the upcoming meeting of the topic group Social Domain. The next meeting will take place in Dortmund (Germany) on April 21 and 22. Hosting organization is the German housing company DOGEWO 21 in Dortmund (http://www.dogewo21.de). One of the which will be addressed is the current situation with housing refugees. Each European country faces currently the influx of refugees and the need to provide shelter or housing to these groups. In many occasions, social housing providers play a major role in providing temporally or permanent housing. The challenge to provide adequate housing, distribute them around the local territory, integrate accepted refugees within the local communities, overcome language and cultural barriers and many other items are very comparative between the countries. As part of the meeting it’s aimed to exchange experiences and visions around this topic. The agenda is still in preparation and will be published soon.

Chairwoman Topic Group:
Elke Heidrich (Eigen Haard): e.heidrich@eigenhaard.nl

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**TOPIC GROUP FINANCE AND INVESTMENT**

First of all, the Topic Group agreed to widen it's scope from finance to finance and investment. These topics are very closely related to each other and require close coordination both on strategic and operational level. The topic expansion enables the group to cover even more subtopics such as risk management, alternative funding and management costs only to name a few.

In October, a rather personal Topic Group meeting in Lille has kindly been hosted by Vilogia and was dedicated to elaborating the Key Performance Indicators-tool (KPI-tool). The following meeting on 12 February in Berlin was hosted by Dr. Klein and focused on usufruct as a means of financing and brainstorming for new project ideas. Both the usufruct-presentation by PERL and the brainstorming led to concentrated and constructive discussions. The brainstorming results have to be revisited before disclosure.

However, an interesting and insightful time lies ahead of the Topic Group Finance & Investment.

New entries to the group were CBRE from Germany and Bureau073 from The Netherlands, both of which gave brief and interesting presentations regarding their business models. Furthermore, the CFO of Dutch housing association Parteon, Jurgen de Ruiter, joined the group.

Date and location of the upcoming meeting will be published on the EFL-website soon.

Chairman of the group:
Hendrik Cornehl (Hendrik.Cornehl@drklein.de).
Dear reader,
My name is Margot Hervé and from now on, I will be supporting EFL from France. Some of you already met me during the EFL Conference in Amsterdam, but I would like to introduce myself to everyone. I am a French undergraduate urban planning student in the “Institut d’Urbanisme de Grenoble” and I already have a college degree in social sciences and urban management. Next year, I plan to do a master’s degree in social entrepreneurship. I am also involved in the international student organization AIESEC, which aims to empower young people by offering international internships and volunteer experiences opportunities to students.

From October until December 2015, I worked as an intern for EFL. One of my missions was to promote the Design Competition on accessible housing to French architecture students. I also did some research about new potential EFL members in the South-East of France. At the end of my internship, Joost Nieuwenhuijzen offered me to work for EFL on part-time basis. This is a huge opportunity for me and I would like to thanks EFL for that. Special thanks also to Julia Siebert, who helped me a lot during my internship, and who is still supporting me now that I am part of the team.

I am absolutely sure I will learn a lot by working for EFL and I think my knowledge about the French social housing sector can be an asset for EFL. I will support the network by writing newsletters and updating the EFL website and Facebook page. I will also participate in the organization of the next EFL conference in Helsinki. Furthermore, I am still actively working on recruiting potential new EFL members in France. Highly motivated to add value to the EFL network, I am looking forward to meeting you all in May during the next EFL conference.

Best regards,
Margot Hervé

European countries are currently facing a big challenge: the massive influx of refugees within the EU. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), more than 1 million migrants claimed for asylum in Europe in 2015. Indeed, one of the biggest challenges is to welcome refugees in decent conditions, notably by providing adequate housing. Today, shelters across Europe are over-populated and cannot accommodate everyone anymore. Thus, social housing providers will most likely play a decisive role in the accommodation and integration of migrants in European countries. Providing appropriate housing on temporary and permanent basis is a real challenge for social landlords in France, UK, the Netherlands, Finland and Germany. However, countries do not respond to the issue in the same way, here is a short overview of the different approaches:
OTHER NEWS

FRANCE: BOTTOM-UP INITIATIVES TO ACCOMMODATE REFUGEES

Marie Arlette CARLOTI (former French minister for people with disabilities and the fight against exclusion) suggested using the 77,310 vacant social housing dwellings on French territory to house migrants. Even though the idea seems to resolve the problem at first (24,000 migrants vs. 77,310 vacant dwellings), it could be argued to have some major limits. First of all, the dwellings’ locations: most of them are vacant due to being located in areas where the offer of social housing is higher than the demand. In those areas the economic activity is mostly low and social life is limited. Of course this raises the question if it is a good idea to house migrants in areas where socialization is difficult as they would be easily excluded from the French society and “migrant ghettos” could be the consequence. This might reduce the chances for integration in the society when the refugees receive their resident status. Furthermore, the International Federation for Housing and Planning (IFHP) states in their Housing Refugee Programme 2015 that “The act of housing refugees should not divert or counter housing provision for native populations; rather it should support and supplement an increased housing supply”, which is an aim to be taken seriously by governments in Europe when looking for solutions for housing refugees.

Regardless of the weaknesses, the debate about Carloti’s approach is in progress in France: it emphasizes the importance of collaborative work between political actors, civil society and private organizations in order to fully integrate migrants in the French society. Likewise, as the asylum policy is still a competence of the French state, there is a rising power of municipalities in the reception of migrants. The government announced in autumn 2015 that they are going to release funds for municipalities participating in the “Solidarity effort” by giving 1,000 euros per additional hosting spot created. Plus, bottom-up initiatives in order to support migrants seem to be an efficient way to take action. For example, the “Guide du Routard” published a free illustrated guide targeted at refugees in France. Distributed to organizations supporting migrants, it contains useful information about accommodation, food, hygiene, etc. Another example is the website “CALM” (Comme A La Maison: “like at home” in English) – working with the same principal as “Refugees welcome” as it connects refugees with individuals who are willing to accommodate them for a certain amount of time. Local social landlords can take part in this movement as well. Nevertheless, a strategic solution for the provision of adequate housing for the still growing number of refugees remains a big challenge in France.

UK: SOCIAL AND PRIVATE LANDLORDS ASKED TO HELP HOUSING REFUGEES

In UK, the government of David Cameron expects social and private landlords to help with housing refugees. Most obviously, housing associations are asked to accommodate refugees with the support of the UK foreign aid budget which ensures to cover the full cost of Syrian refugees during their first year in UK. Consequently, in practice, local authorities have the responsibility to accommodate asylum-seekers and have to discuss with social landlords to find a mutual agreement. Still, housing associations wonder what is going to happen after one year: most asylum-seekers will probably not be able to support themselves and funds will be insufficient to accommodate refugees without loosing money for social landlords. Private landlords are also asked to accommodate asylum-seekers, on a price below the market rate. Rents will be paid by local councils during the first year, thanks to the Home Office Funding. As further support, in March 2011, the Scottish Refugee Council published a “Practitioner’s guide to housing refugees” in order to help social and private landlords to support asylum-seekers. Furthermore, a lot of charity organizations in UK offer support to refugees coming from the Middle East (“Room for refugees”, for instance) and housing associations are asked to support local volunteer groups in their efforts to house refugees. Such an example is “The Hope Project” in Birmingham that aims to manage properties in order to house refugees on a temporary basis and to empower asylum-seekers to be self-reliant. To support that initiative, housing associations can for instance give some of their dwellings under the management of this charity. Furthermore, housing associations play an important role by providing refugees with advice and teaching them about their housing rights.
THE NETHERLANDS: THE “HOME AGAIN” PLATFORM

In the Netherlands, almost all status holders (refugees with a residence permit) were accommodated by social landlords in 2014 (nearly 14,000 refugees). The National Federation of Social Housing Associations (AEDES) created the “Home again” platform (Platform Opnieuw Thuis) to help the central government on the distribution of refugees in the country. The central governments decide about the distribution of status holders among the local municipalities, based on cities’ capacities. The “Home again” platform helps in screening processes and mapping of available housing stock within the country. According to Harry Bosch (Director of Housing Association Waterweg Wonen and participating in the Platform Home Again on behalf of AEDES) “The Home Again platform provides support to identify administrative or practical obstacles and resolves them.” The Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) is in charge of linking status-holders to municipalities. The municipalities then have 12 weeks to find accommodation for refugees, who have a priority status. The question if status-holders also have an absolute priority right on social housing over Dutch citizens is still in discussion. Actually, this problem has been transferred from national to local governments. Indeed, IFHP’s (International Federation for Housing and Planning) Housing Refugees Programme 2015 stresses that considering the demographics of the existing population is very important. Hugo Priemus (Emeritus Professor OTB Institute Delft) says “there is a need for EU and national policies to facilitate the local scale intervention of civil society to help provide housing according to local needs and available resources.”

Progress of Dutch municipalities in achieving refugee housing quotas - January 2016
(source: Opnieuw Thuis platform)
FINLAND: REFUGEES COULD BE A SOLUTION TO THE AGEING POPULATION

Several organizations are in charge of the reception of refugees in Finland. The Refugee Advice Center gives help and guidance on legal issues to refugees while the Finnish Refugee Council assisted by the Finnish Red Cross provides support on housing and integration in the Finnish society. Dr Sue Lukes (director of Migration Work CIC, UK) states that housing plays an important role in the inclusion of refugees in the society: “Housing and integration practices were described as disjointed but essential to ensure that housing succeeds as a tool to integrate and enable refugees to become valuable members of society.” Inclusion of refugees is particularly important as the Finnish population is getting older. Immigration could be a possible answer to the ageing population, by enhancing the Finnish economy, says Juhana Brotherus (chief economist of Hypo – a specialized housing credit facility). However, Finland faces an insufficient housing production, especially in growth centers, where social support networks and employment opportunities for refugees are given. Juhana Brotherus underlines that to welcome refugees, new dwellings have to be built in growing cities.

As in the Netherlands, some tenants associations are worried that asylum-seekers will pass the low-income Finnish citizens in the social housing demand queue. Anne Viita (Tenants association’s executive director) emphasizes that over 30 % of the 45 000 social dwellings owned by the city of Helsinki are already occupied by foreign people. Refugees can also be accommodated by local citizens – thanks to “Refugee Welcome Finland”, adapted from the German version.

GERMANY: APPEAL TO CITIZEN & HUGE INVESTMENTS

Germany is surely the European country who welcomed the most refugees (1.1 Million in 2015). As a result, shelters are full and have no capacity anymore. The Federal government is trying to find new ways in order to accommodate refugees in decent conditions. One of the suggestions is to rely on German citizens who live in low rent houses but can afford higher rents. Indeed, the Berlin Institute of Urban Development says: “Considering that the vast majority [of migrants] can only afford cheaper housing, a chain reaction of moves must be initiated in which higher income households purchase or build more expensive accommodations for themselves in order to free up the less expensive housing for migrants”. However, this chain would need a lot of time until it becomes effective. Furthermore, some towns offer to buy vacant properties in order to accommodate refugees (examples are the cities of Tübingen and Olpe). The government estimates that Germany is in need of 350 000 dwellings per year. The German Public Bank (KfW) decided to increase the subsidies for the construction of houses for refugees (1 billion euros). With that amount of money, they expect 150 000 dwellings for refugees to be built. In order to respond to the massive arrival of refugees in the country, some Dutch and Belgian experts are helping Arkitektus (a German company specialized in rapid housing solutions) to build modular houses which are built very quickly with prefabricated materials and fully equipped. In cooperation with German authorities, these houses could accommodate refugees in a short amount of time. Modular houses could also be re-used later to accommodate students or seniors – says Arkitektus.

All in all, each country deals with the refugee situation in its own way. But one thing is certain: providing a response in terms of access to housing for the influx of migrants is more than ever a major challenge for the European social landlords in 2016.
AGENDA

19 April – Topic Group Energy Efficiency – Delft

21-22 April – Topic Group Social Domain – Dortmund

11-13 May – EFL Conference – Helsinki

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