

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT & REFUGEE HOUSING



EUROPEAN FEDERATION
FOR LIVING



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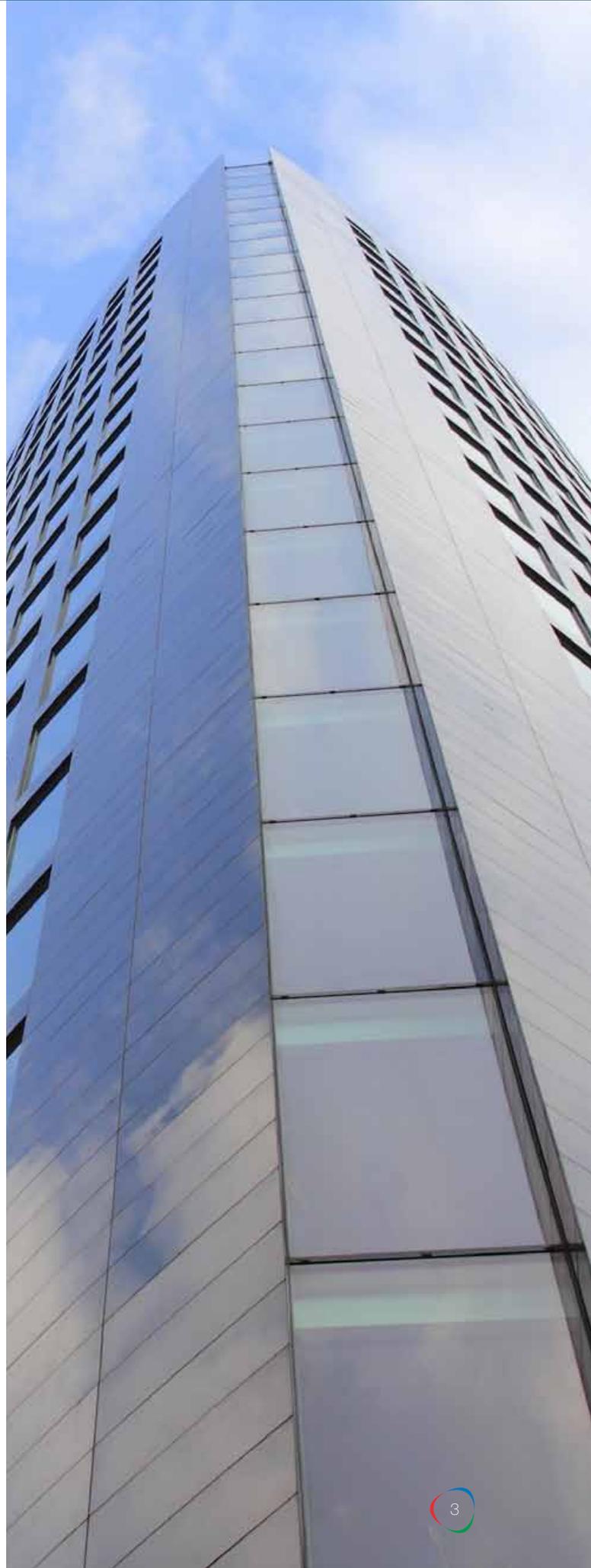
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1. INTRODUCTION

Housing organisations, of both social, public or private background, share one common aspect: they are acting as housing provider in the public domain. Most of them work hard to improve the living standards of their tenants in neighbourhoods. Important is to share knowledge and experiences across borders to fuel this debate and offer practical solutions to be applied in different contexts. On 21-22 April 2016, EFL and Eurhonet members of the topic group Social Domain were hosted by Housing association DOGEWO21 for a two-day visit in Dortmund. The theme of the first day was Social Development for and with tenants. After a presentation of DOGEWO21's approach and a discussion with other members, the group undertook a field-visit to two different locations in the city. Here the work and initiatives of DOGEWO21 were seen in practice, supported with valuable information of the success of these initiatives. The day was ended with a joint dinner in the city centre of Dortmund.

On the second day, four members presented their approach on how to deal with the current situation and the integration of refugees. A very relevant theme, where every city and housing association can currently relate to. Experiences were shared and new ideas were picked up, all to enhance and develop the work of housing associations.

This brochure is an outline of what is being discussed and what approaches members take to tackle borderless issues. We hope that this will help housing associations to advance and develop their practices on these important themes.



2. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT FOR AND WITH TENANTS

DOGEWO21 (Dortmunder Gesellschaft für Wohnen) aims to do more than just providing a roof for their tenants. With their active involvement in urban development, their quarters are developed to provide housing for residents in every stage of their life. To meet the needs and wishes of all tenants, DOGEWO21 operates with three core competences: rental; maintenance; and social development.

1. Rental

As tenants want to stay in their flat as long as possible, DOGEWO21 accommodates both economic useful and social responsible renting. DOGEWO21 invests great sums of money (ca. €40 million in 2015) in modernizing and maintaining their stock. By reducing barriers, an infrastructure is created which is suitable for all ages and meet the demand of tenants. As a result, tenants do not have to move directly when the first mobility issues come at play. This is beneficial for the continuation and sustainability of neighbourhood networks.

2. Maintenance

As not all barriers can be removed, DOGEWO21 focuses on making every flat more accessible. DOGEWO21 mostly focuses on the ground- and first floor apartment. Two major interventions are placing a lift to overcome the 4-5 steps at the entrance of the flat, see figure 1. The second upgrade is a floor level-shower instead of a bathtub shower.

The structural modernization of the flats is guided by a manual ("Roter Faden"), with a detailed description of what (technical) steps to take. In addition, DOGEWO21 has set up an internal topic group for discussing new trends and make suggestions on removing barriers. The acquainted information is diffused both inside the company, and to all tenants. This group also includes a trainee program where employees can experience personally how to deal with mobility issues.

3. Social Development

To keep the neighbourhoods alive and encourage social interaction among tenants, DOGEWO21 invests a lot of resources (€200.000) in social development. DOGEWO21 has introduced "Nachbarschaftagenturen"; neighbourhood agencies providing social activities for tenants. These are supported by social workers and/or employees of DOGEWO21. As of now, these are found in five different residential

neighbourhoods. In these areas, DOGEWO21 offers a room to meet, but the activities are organized by tenants themselves. In addition, various socially responsible partners such as welfare and charity organizations (such as Caritas) and local authorities are involved to empower residents.

initiatives for Children

In addition, special programs are set up focusing on the well-being of children and their engagement in the neighbourhood. One example is "Spielmobil": a transporter equipped with toys. Accompanied by two educationalists, this set-up can be found at four different locations. The second initiative is "Spieletonne": a mobile playground in a special residential neighbourhood with qualified staff to look after kids.

Initiatives for Seniors

Besides the neighbourhood meeting points who are accessible to all, DOGEWO21 also offers two special services for seniors. "Kuh 31-Treff", is a ground floor flat which functions as a weekly meeting point for two groups of elderly people. But there are also more advanced options where tenants are accompanied by qualified staff for support (up to 24hours a day).

To continue the support to various groups of residents, DOGEWO21 works with Projects on modern technology research. Universities and research groups are involved to develop and check whether new virtual systems can be used to simplify the multilateral transfer of information.



3. EXPERIENCES FROM FIELD VISIT

The first visit was Dortmund-Wambel, a neighbourhood in the west of Dortmund. After this, DOGEWO21 took us to Dortmund-Löttringhauser, in the south of the city. Both examples showed the importance of creating a space for people, communities and individuals where one can come together to organize themselves.



Dortmund-Wambel

Our hosts showed us their work and properties in the Dortmund-Wambel area. Some of the well maintained stock was decorated with large wall paintings. Urban art-interventions contribute to the feel and look of the urban landscape, see figure 2.

In most quarters, DOGEWO21 has service centres to support tenants. It functions as a contact point where residents can come to get assistance on housing related matters. This adds value to the social cohesion in the neighbourhood and gives tenants a place to be heard. In all quarters, the DOGEWO21 service centres look the same and are characterized by the distinguishable red colour, see figure 3. This house style creates familiarity and makes them recognizable.

Staffed with DOGEWO21 employees, the service centres have visiting hours (13-15hr) which are regularly used. But tenants can also make individual appointments. The centres provide information letters and organizes information events, for example on modernization of neighborhoods changes.



Figure 3 - DoGEWO21 service center

bench in figure 4. Compared to a regular bench, one is higher which makes it easier for seniors to sit down. Moreover, this design has space for elders to park their walker. With these tools, DOGEWO21 tries to keep the neighbourhood alive.



This neighbourhood visit was followed by a visit in one of the flats. That flat was equipped to provide a room for tenants to meet. The creation of places where residents can come together is a very important aspect of the neighbourhood work done by DOGEWO21. Residents can initiate meet-ups and organize activities themselves. This visit also showed the modernization work of DOGEWO21. Some attendees were very surprised that DOGEWO21 is not responsible for equipping a flat with a kitchen. As personal tastes differ greatly, tenants take care of this themselves. When moving, the kitchen is often taken with them and placed in their new homes. >

3. EXPERIENCES FROM FIELD VISIT



Dortmund-Löttringhausen

The second destination was specifically interesting as a very successful Nachbarschafts agentur was located here. Supported with EU funding for regional development (figure 5), DOGEWO21 has opened a unit here which provides room for tenants to meet. The EU funding was available for two years and was meant to help setting up this agency. The agency is a much visited unit in the neighbourhood. It has a large living room with small kitchen. When being there (3pm), around 25 old ladies were present to play games, drink coffee and enjoy each others company. DOGEWO21 only offers the physical space to meet, and an employee running the agency. With a very busy scheme, language courses, computer lessons and yoga is offered to all tenants in the neighbourhood. Every day there are activities, contributing to the liveability of the area, shown in figure 6.

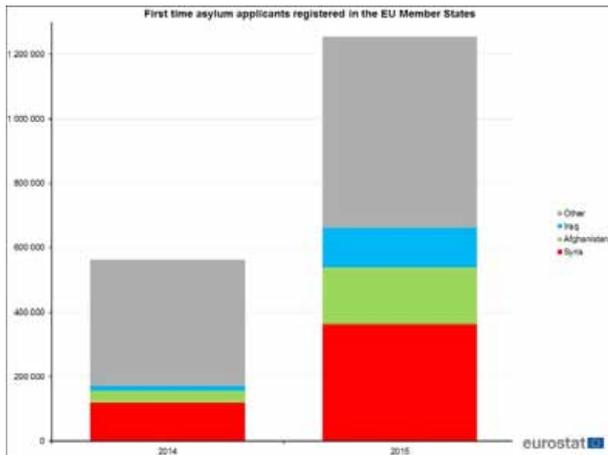
This centre contributes to the creation of a social network. Its open character and low key activities are essential to its success. Tenants themselves decide on the activities and when these are offered.

The neighbourhood tour was ended with a stunning view from the 12th floor of a DOGEWO21 flat. Besides modernizing the units in this flat itself, the ground floor apartments were removed to create a spacious lobby and increase accessibility.



4. REFUGEE HOUSING AND INTEGRATION

Last year, Europe witnessed over one million refugees claiming asylum in Europe in 2015, see figure 7. Although the size and nature of the refugee crisis is still unknown, one of the main challenges for European social landlords is to provide adequate and appropriate housing on a temporary and permanent basis.



The recorded jump in asylum seekers puts pressures on local and national housing markets, and some countries do not have the capacity to house refugees in their existing facilities. As such, creative solutions are needed as affordable housing remains difficult across Europe. Housing shortages concentrate around the main urban centres where social housing waiting lists continue to rise. As a result, the refugee's crisis affects more than one group: it is a challenge for country, cities and societies. Perspectives from Dortmund, Berlin, Bolton and Amsterdam were presented to share knowledge and innovative ideas.

GERMANY: DOGEWO21 & GEBOWAG

Context Germany

As the number of refugees entering the EU has risen, Germany's share has multiplied, see figure 8. The number of refugees in Germany is 1.1 million (2015). Although it is hard to estimate the exact number of refugees coming, and those eventually staying, this figure is expected to grow to 500,000 per year for the next five years. This will make a total of 2,6 million refugees in 2020.

Context Dortmund

In February 2016, 8000 refugees were living in the city of Dortmund (total 595,000 residents). This is in accordance with the average ratio in all big German cities. Dortmund is seen as an attractive city as it historically has always hosted many ethnic groups. The networks that are in place offers many opportunities for newcomers. In addition, there are over twenty emergency and longer term accommodations available all over the city. These include container camps, tent camps, empty hotels and school, school gyms. Unique for Dortmund are the two old cruise ships in the Dortmund harbour. These ships already have the right infrastructure in place which makes them very suitable for housing large groups of people.



figure 8 – number of refugees in EU versus share in Germany (2008-2015). Source Eurostat (2015)

4. REFUGEE HOUSING AND INTEGRATION

Role of DOGEWO21

After the first area-wide redistribution processes, the first permits of status holders are handed out by the municipality. Only with such a permits, DOGEWO21 starts renting out flats directly to the eligible refugees with a safe status (allowed to stay for at least six months). DOGEWO21 also rents out complete buildings to the municipality and other organizations, which are being sublet to refugees. In this way, DOGEWO21 has a contract with a third party, and not directly with the refugees as clients and tenants.

Moreover, as it is currently impossible to build new housing stock, DOGEWO21 creates new living spaces without creating new buildings. This is done by turning top floors attics into small living spaces or by adding an additional storey to existing buildings. These options are perfectly suited for lower income groups, students, but also refugees.

Challenges

It remains very difficult to manage the shortage of apartments. There is tension between those on waiting lists' and newcomers getting priority housing. To deal with these conflicts, transparency about what you do and why decisions are made is crucial in getting mutual understanding. Furthermore, the language and cultural barriers continue to be difficult. To avoid neighbourhood- and social problems, DOGEWO21 takes special care of situations where new groups move in. Successful integration of refugees requires informing them about housing rules and the translation of documents. This includes making use of non-verbal means of communication such as pictograms and educational films.

To guide this process, DOGEWO21 initiated a task force for refugee housing. By looking for creative solutions in- and outside existing networks, aim is to copy good ideas across borders. In addition, DOGEWO21 invests in teaching and supporting their staff in dealing with conflicts, cultural differences and other new developments in their work sphere. Also on the ground, involving tenants is key to success. By appointing some kind of "refugee godfathers and mothers", support on basic house rules and cultural norms are given on neighbourhood level.

Context Berlin

Berlin accommodated 80.000 refugees in 2015. Of these, approximately 55.000 were allowed to stay. As Berlin is experiencing a large influx of residents, the number of inhabitants will increase by 200.000 until 2020. According to the forecasts, Berlin will be home to 4 million residents (compared to 3,6 million now). As such, the Senate estimated that 15.000 to 20.000 new dwellings are necessary every year.

Housing gebowag

Berlin has set a quota for all public housing companies to supplying housing for refugees. Compared to 2015, this number was doubled to 110 apartments in 2016 for Gebowag. This applies for both refugees as status holders. However, this is an incomplete number as some status holders also started applying for housing through the conventional procedures.

As many refugees are now housed in school gyms, and even an airport, pioneer housing for refugees needs to be planned flexible and modularly. To make additional housing development possible, Berlin needs faster acquisition of building rights, and more rapid planning decisions.

Initiatives gebowag

One of the approaches of Gebowag is the reconstruction of a former Gebowag office in West Berlin. The about 600m² living space will be turned into 22 rooms (15-45m²). This building will be delivered to the LAGeSo (Landesamt Fur Gesundheit und Soziales), the institution where the procedure for refugees starts with. A second project of Gebowag is new modular accommodation as a permanent solution. This is taking place at two different properties: Berlin-Reinickendorf and Berlin-Spandau. Both are now being used as parking space, but will host up to 225-500 refugees in the near future. The small units are now targeted at refugees, but in the future this could also be used to house students. To spur integration, it is important that accommodation should be built in areas with a good infrastructure (local transport, retail, public schools, kindergarden, services).

4. REFUGEE HOUSING AND INTEGRATION

Gebowag internships

To offer young refugees a chance to integrate in the labour market, internships (6-12 months) are GEBOWAG offered in cooperation with employment agencies and the immigration authority. As of now, there are up to 10 refugees with working permission and a long-term perspective to stay. Although the integration of refugees into the labour market remains a challenge, GEBOWAG sees it as a chance to gain and qualify future specialists. These initiatives are designed to help Berlin in the current situation, but it should not interfere with the core task of GEBOWAG in supplying affordable housing. In other words, Gebowag should not only focus on refugees.

AMSTERDAM: EIGEN HAARD

Context Amsterdam

In Amsterdam, the municipality is responsible for the allocation of status holders. In 2015, Amsterdam was the number 1 city in The Netherlands behind on meeting the set quotas of housing refugees and status holders, see figure 9.

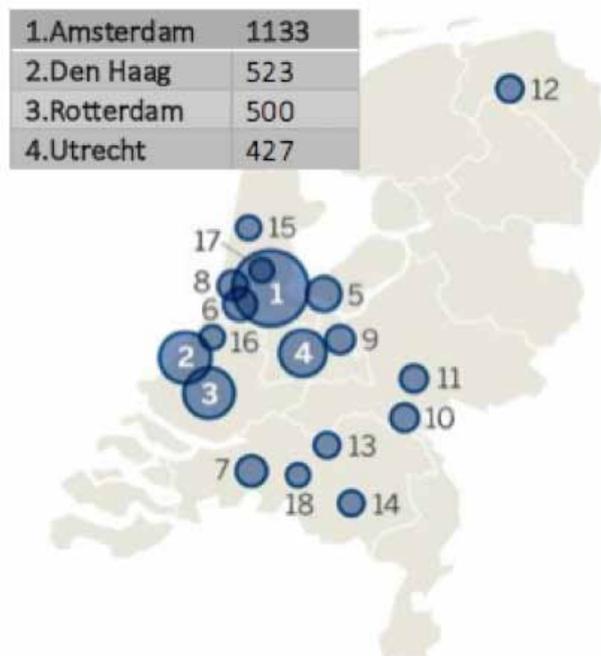


figure 9 – Number of houses Dutch cities are behind on the set quotas (2015) for provision of status holders and refugees.

For 2015, the city had to house up to 950 individuals, of which Eigen Haard is responsible for 180 individuals. The public is supportive towards housing more status holders, as long as regular home seekers are not endangered in their chances. Eigen Haard is approaching this situation by building for the latter group, and allocating the newly vacant stock to status-holders. Besides the allocation, the municipality has to take care of the payment of benefits, the provision of language courses and work.

Role of Eigen Haard

Eigen Haard works with an integration plan: the provision of rapid accommodation and maximum integrating. Eigen Haard provides the homes and ensures good tenancy. This includes a good distribution of accommodation and prioritising its allocation. Eigen Haard plans to build 500-1000 homes for refugees in the next years. This includes small scale neighbourhood expansions, but also the creation of new build neighbourhoods. The allocation of status holders works the same as for conventional home seekers. By law, all applicants for social housing have to be suitable, concerning the price and size of houses. As this suitability test is only valid for those living in the Netherlands, problems arise when family reunification comes at play. The assigned houses turn out to be too small to host additional family members. This means moving and losing the social contacts and networks in the neighbourhoods.

Test case amsterdam-noord

As a test-case, a new, mixed-community will be developed in a still to be established neighbourhood in Amsterdam-Noord. Although the government encourages housing cooperation's to build semi-permanent housing, Eigen Haard would rather offer sustainable solutions by building permanent housing. However, as the procedure of getting all necessary permits for real buildings takes too long, the Amsterdam-Noord project will start with semi-permanent housing in the form of porta-cabins. When the 'real' houses are ready, families can move while staying in their neighbourhood.

4. REFUGEE HOUSING AND INTEGRATION

To facilitate a good integration of status holders, this project needs young families with children, see figure 10. The idea is to mix these conventional families with status holders families, both in the same stage of their lives, both newcomers in the neighbourhood and make them buddies. This will increase the contact which benefits the creation of a (sense of) community. Amsterdam provides the perfect context for this experiment as the housing market is very tight and the market shortage offer opportunities for it to be a good concept. To fuel these developments, much is invested in research and experimentation.

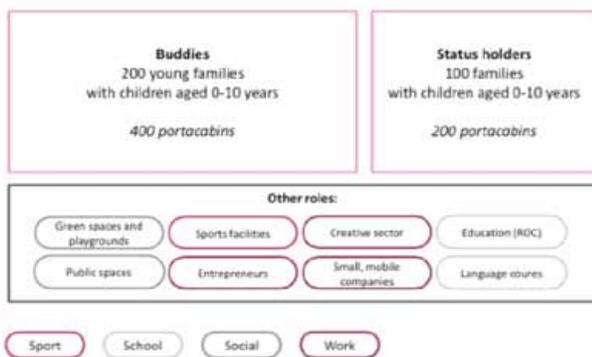


Figure 10 - Test bed Amsterdam-noord

BOLTON AT HOME

UK Context & Bolton

To start, the number of refugees in the UK is very little compared to the in other European countries, see figure 11.

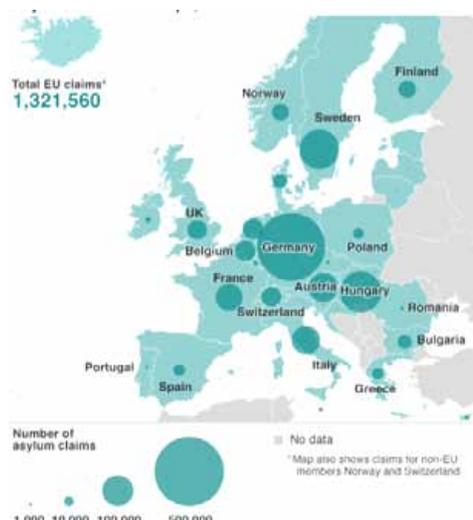


figure 11 – Asylum claims in europe in 2015. Source Eurostat (2015)

In 2012, the mixed housing provision between the public and private sector ended all over the UK. As such, housing refugees became the sole responsibility of private companies like Serco. Being commissioned by the UK government, this company manages all refugee processes, including looking for housing options in the private sector. However, renting out facilities from private landlords leads to many issues. This includes the limited control on the standards of the accommodation assigned to refugees. In Bolton, the private landlords are in a very advantageous situation as the housing demand itself is not very high. Through Serco they get an easy way to rent out their stock without much hassle.

Housing in Bolton

Currently there are about 1200 asylum seekers and refugees in Bolton going through a process of decision making. Once they have a permanent status, they enter the general housing waiting list. This is also the moment when they can access all mainstream housing services. In Bolton, housing can be quickly provided. Whenever this is not the case, temporary housing is arranged by local authorities. Bolton is a diverse town, with large numbers of the migrant population living together in certain neighbourhoods. These areas are popular to the newcomers as the (social) networks are familiar and already in place. Nonetheless, Bolton at Home focuses on breaking these up to provide all forms of social support across the whole borough. This contributes to encouraging social integration across the whole town, which has resulted in the willingness of more families to move to other geographical areas.

Social Integration

Concerning increasing social integration, Bolton at Home works with existing volunteering community organization centres. By providing space and the facilities integration is encouraged, especially when activities are organized by interested parties themselves. Volunteer organizations can apply for funding themselves, in which they have been very successful. Examples are a conversation café, music classes and dinner parties. Inviting and bringing people together results in community involvement, increasing the chances of a solid integration.

5. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS



- Martin Andersson (AB Familyebostäder)
- Cesale Alessandro (Eurhonet)
- Delphine Deleneuve (Vilogia)
- Rosa de Hoog (EFL)
- Petra Götsch (IPES)
- Elke Heidrich (Eigen HaarD)
- Katja Jüngst (DOGEWO21)
- Joost Nieuwenhuijzen (EFL)
- Maria Nordhag (ÖrebroBostäder AB)
- Katja Sievert (DOGEWO21)
- **Barbara Steenbergern**
(International Union of Tenants)
- Regine Stoerring (DOGEWO21)
- Marc Turnbull (Bolton Home)
- Franziska Zeisig (Gewobag)



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