

DEPART CONFERENCE 1

Housing provision for Roma and other traveller communities

Maribor, 21st April 2016

Conference report

Participation:

The event involved 121 citizens, including 69 participants from Austria, 3 participants from Croatia, 1 participant from France, 6 participants from Hungary, 3 participants from Italy, 10 participants from Slovakia, 29 participants from Slovenia

Location / Dates:

The event took place in Maribor, Slovenia on April 21st 2016.

Short description:

The first thematic event was dedicated to the topic of housing provision for Roma and other traveller communities. This is a core task and responsibility of municipalities. The first keynote was held by a stakeholder of the Roma community and established and presented the background for discussions and deductions. The morning led to a in depth discussion of the subject and dealt with successful examples and led to new ideas.

Highlights from the Roma cuisine during the lunch break and afterwards cultural Roma singing were the starter for the informative and constructive afternoon sessions. After some keynotes a workshop and a panel discussion with stakeholders, representatives out of the target groups and experts in housing were held. Concrete transfer plans to other countries, regions and target groups were established in the final working groups together with local and EU experts, Roma and other citizens.

Conference report:

The conference, organized by the **City of Graz**, **EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURS** and the **Municipality of Maribor** was dedicated to the topic of housing for Roma as in the title above visible.

After the opening by the vice-major of the Municipality of Maribor Mr. **Zdravko Luketic** and Mrs. **Sissi Potzinger**, local councilor of the **City of Graz**, the conference began with the first keynote „Roma integration through social housing“ held by Mr. **Thomas Schobesberger**, representative of the taskforce of the Alliance for Roma Inclusion Congress of Local and Regional Authorities Council of Europe. In his lecture he described the situation of Roma and Travelers in Europe including the Antigypsyism, an ideology founded on racial superiority, a form of dehumanization and institutional racism nurtured by historical discrimination. He outlined the often deplorable conditions (segregation in the Czech Republic, authorized fenced settlements in Italy, evictions to sub-standard areas in Romania) and forced evictions. He described the gap between Roma and non-Roma in terms of housing and living conditions, a situation which is actually widening.

The next keynote was held by Mr. **Haris Tahirović**, representative of the Association of Roma communities of Slovenia with the title „Housing issues of Roma in Slovenia“. He explained the bad situation in housing

and the discrimination of Roma in rural and urban areas very personal and authentic and confirmed the versions of Mr. Schobesberger.

Mr. **Darko Rudas**, member of the City Council of Murska Sobota, submitted under the title „Good practices in improving the access of Roma to housing“ the following: Coexistence is a reality that we must accept and diversity is a fact. Education is a bridge to social inclusion. He spoke about the coexistence of Roma and non-Roma and the positive examples at the hand of a kindergarten, conference events, fire station, an information point, a children's playground and presidents memorial for 100 years of existence of the Roma settlement. At the end of his keynote he reported about the existing Roma village in Murska Sobota.

Mr. **Heidulf Gerngross** - Archistrator, Arch. DI, MS urban land economic, he works as an integrator of art, architecture and social living, he is the editor of the magazine ST/A/R, held a keynote under the title „Schnell / Häuser“. He reported on practical examples with a specially developed typology of containers that have been created as infrastructural basic and base facility that were then completed with self-expendables, the so called „Schnell / Häuser“ which in English stands for fast / quick houses.

Mr. **Gyorgy Sumeghy** - Habitat for Humanity International reported about „A review of policy best practices and challenges to improve the access of Roma to housing“. Habitat works in more than 80 countries, has helped more than 4 million people construct, rehabilitate or preserve homes since 1976, also advocates for fair and just housing policies and provides training and access to resources to help families to improve their shelter conditions. Habitat runs housing projects and advocates for the better housing of Roma in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania and Slovakia. The activities range from trainings, home building and renovations, housing microfinance, legalization and policy advocacy. He reported on the pilot project with Brno: “housing first” for the Roma: 50 families will be moved to social housing scattered in the city. Another thing he mentioned was the reconstructing of the „Main Street” in György-mine, implemented by the local Handymen’s Club.

Mrs. **Marion Alexandra Würz-Stalder**, DI arch., teacher at the FH Joanneum Graz, presented Pathways of Roma housing inclusion (good practices and ideas) the ECOTOPIA MODELL - a research work with the title „Das Ökotoxia-Modell“, a quantitative, multi-criteria analysis instrument for higher security decision in the sustainable development of smart cities.

Based on 7 research areas following criteria were examined:

- POPULATION DENSITY
- BUILD UP AREA
- GREEN AREA
- COVERED AREA
- PUBLIC AREA
- USEABLE LIVING AREA
- PLOT RATIO
- HEATING DEMAND
- DEMAND OF PRIMARY ENERGY
- CO2 EMISSION
- URBAN STRUCTURE (support of daily demand, influence on the decision of means of transport)

At least Mr. **Alfred Borić**, Architect, DI. spoke about the development of emergency shelters, prefabricated houses and trends in the dwelling of the future based on examples.

Assuming the following scenario, a workshop with stakeholders was conducted:

- You have to leave your residence hastily - a nationwide disaster robs your home.
- You leave in a group of 6 to 8 people to create a new home.
- What are the three most important things you need in your future dwelling.
- These three needs have to be developed in each single group in order to be presented after the workshop.
- Timeframe: 40 minutes

The results were presented and a panel discussion according to the topic held > moderated by Mr. Borić. „**Social housing - give people the choice**“ and „**Identification of transfer potential of good practice approaches, conclusions and recommendations**“ were further themes of the panel discussion.

Transfer plans for the presented examples of good practice were made between the participating municipalities and countries. Therefore the city of Murska Sobota (SL) is interested to implement the work of Habitat for Humanity in their region. The participants from FH Joanneum in Graz together with Mrs. Marion Alexandra Würz-Stalder and Mr. Alfred Boric are thinking on a follow-up project within their studies and in addition to it for their future professionalism. The very exciting inputs from Heidulf Gerngross will lead into new perspectives for urban planers. Considering that an article about the results of the conference will be published in the ST/A/R magazine, one of the most important and pioneering magazines for architects and urban planners in Europe.

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