

## HIAH International Board: Meeting Note

Date: 15 July 2025 (online)

### Attendance:

Montserrat Pareja Eastaway

Julie Lawson

Enda McGuane

Richard Ronald

Bob Jordan (Chair)

### 1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

Bob Jordan opened the meeting with appreciation for members' engagement with the Working Groups and SFPI.

Board members noted the success of the recent European Network for Housing Research (ENHR) conference in Paris and the quality of discussions.

### Updates included:

- A revolving model for the affordable housing fund has been agreed. SFPI has negotiated with the Ministry of Finance that a proportion of the funding for cost-rental affordable housing can be preserved in SFPI to be reused, with the conditions of future financing mechanisms to be set by SFPI.
- Legislation for limited-profit housing associations is being drafted.
- An off-balance sheet financing model for cost rental housing is being explored but has not been resolved.
- Upcoming Czech elections (3-4 October) are likely to influence housing policy direction.

## 2. Working Group Updates

### Financial Instruments (Julie Lawson)

- Excellent session held in Prague with high-level financial experts.
- A central topic was off-balance sheet treatment of limited-profit housing associations.
  - Need for guidance on Eurostat rules. SFPI is consulting with Czech Statistical Office.
  - Austria's decision-tree model on classification seen as useful for Czechia.
- In terms of representation:
  - Involve Ministry of Finance more directly.
  - Include resident/tenant voices to ensure value-for-money principles.
- Priority topic: Off-balance sheet Financing in Czechia.
- Ongoing topic: Structure and governance of revolving funds, particularly reinvestment visibility and fund protection.
- Cautioned against over-reliance on public-private partnerships (PPPs), which may be less efficient than cost-recovery models.

### Land Development and Urban Planning (Enda McGuane)

- Strong engagement and language barriers are being overcome.
- Key output is a data instrument to assess land suitability for development based on social and infrastructure criteria (e.g. schools, transport).
- Highlighted the hidden costs of new apartment building to municipalities, particularly where sites selected are poorly connected to existing infrastructure.
- Potential to identify 3-4 exemplar development sites (small/medium/large). Use these to promote best practice planning using data instrument and funding, these are then shared as examples to educate mayors and policy makers.
- Absence of understanding of the need for coordination of local, regional and national spatial planning frameworks with strategic development and asset management at each of the governance levels. Czechia lacks instruments for effective spatial planning implementation.

### **Trust Between Public and Private Sectors (Montserrat Pareja Eastaway)**

- Explored public-private cooperation to build affordable housing.
- Identified barriers to trust:
  - Path dependency of institutions and cultural mistrust.
  - Room for low transparency on both sides, whether public (unclear conditions) or private (speculation)
  - Conservative public sector approach to risk management due to political and public scrutiny.
- Proposed Enablers:
  - Intermediary organisations (e.g. SFPI regional advisory offices) to act as a bridge between the public and private sectors, through advice, support and liaison.
  - Strong political leadership, shared development vision and instruments for mutual accountability.
  - Use of surveys to identify barriers from private sector's perspective.
  - Emphasised that trust is a process, not just an outcome.
- Next Steps:
  - Explore creating a shared agreement framework.
  - Develop principles/checklist for trust-building.
  - Recognise affordable housing as a public interest.

Richard commented on the strong progress to date and welcomed the opportunity to catch up with the activities of the working groups.

Bob emphasised importance of aligning all three working groups into a cohesive framework.

### 3. Strategic Discussion: Integrating Sustainability

Sustainability as a cross-cutting theme was discussed with contributions from all Working Groups.

- Enda stressed importance of redefining sustainability beyond environmental metrics to include:
  - Long-term community viability – education, jobs, services recreation.
  - Financial sustainability in terms of operating costs.
  - Tenant and neighbourhood resilience.
- Julie described need to ensure sustainability of financial structures by:
  - Preventing equity extraction (i.e. prohibiting sale of public assets)
  - Embedding governance that guarantees reinvestment.
  - Protecting revolving funds via legal frameworks.
- Montserrat emphasised institutional sustainability:
  - Need for durable partnerships.
  - Balance of competencies among public, private, and non-profit actors.

### 4. Priority Actions Agreed (to be delivered by November 2025)

Working Group	Priority Action
Finance	Develop proposals on off-balance sheet mechanisms and progress engagement with Ministry of Finance.
Urban Planning	Finalise and test the data instrument. Use exemplar projects to support policy discussions and national spatial planning.
Trust	Draft a set of principles or checklist for trust-building. Map potential intermediaries. Support ongoing surveys to identify barriers in public-private partnerships.

## 5. Upcoming Meetings and Events

- 29 – 30 September: HIAH at High-level conference on affordable and sustainable housing
- 18 November: SHAPE Conference on Neighbourhood Renovation, Prague (HIAH potentially present)
- 19 November: Housing Finance Summit (SFPI), Prague (All IB members to attend, if possible)
- 26 August: Preparatory meetings (WG Chairs + IB member)
- End September: Next IB Meeting (this may take place at same time as Ministry meeting, depending on IB members' availability)
- End October: Next HIAH and IB meeting

## 8. Closing Remarks

Bob closed the meeting emphasising:

- The high degree of progress made across all working groups.
- Critical importance of translating discussions into a tangible action plan with clear activities and objectives.
- Sustaining collaboration across elections and institutional change.

Julie to share principles paper from European Housing Task Force.