

A low-angle photograph of a brick building against a clear blue sky. A blue dashed line graphic is overlaid on the image, tracing the edges of the building's roof and walls. The line starts at the top left, goes down the left wall, then up the right wall, and then down the right wall. It also forms a small loop around a window on the right side.

EUROPEAN FEDERATION FOR LIVING

Annual Report 2023



EUROPEAN FEDERATION
FOR LIVING

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FOREWORD

Dear Members, Associates, and Stakeholders,

It's our pleasure to present to you the Annual Report for the year 2023, a proof to the resilience, innovation, and collaborative spirit that define the European Federation for Living (EFL). As we reflect on the second full year following the pandemic, we celebrate a year filled with inspiration, collaboration, and successful conferences that have propelled our organization forward.

In 2023, EFL remained steadfast in its commitment to fostering the growth and engagement of a new generation of housing professionals while facilitating meaningful exchanges with seasoned peers. Membership Development remained a key focus area, with a slight downward trend in trajectory contrasting with pre-pandemic growth. However, we observed a relative stabilization in 2023, with existing members demonstrating heightened levels of commitment.

Policy Focus in 2023 centered around the social dimension of housing, responding to members' aspirations to enhance social performance within our ESG policy framework. Notable efforts included a comprehensive study on the measurability of social investments among our members, shedding light on disparities in social impact evaluation across regions.

Our flagship conferences in Paris and Belfast, themed around the global significance of affordable housing and international responses to shared housing challenges, respectively, drew significant participation and facilitated enriching exchanges among participants from various backgrounds and countries.

Furthermore, the expansion of our Topic Groups offerings, with the addition of a fifth group dedicated to Age-Friendly Living, stresses our commitment to addressing evolving challenges in the housing sector comprehensively.

Financially, while we faced a small deficit in the previous year, this does not pose any long-term implications for EFL, and our commitment to fiscal responsibility remains unwavering. We extend our gratitude to all our members, associates, academic partners, and guests for their invaluable contributions and support throughout the year. We are confident that our collective efforts will continue to drive positive change and empower the next generation of housing professionals.

Thank you for your continued partnership and dedication to the mission of EFL.

Ben Pluijmers, Chairman EFL

Joost Nieuwenhuijzen, Executive Director EFL



INTRODUCTION

The second full year following the pandemic brought another year filled with inspiration, collaboration, exchange, and successful conferences for EFL. Notably, we continued to foster the growth and engagement of a new generation of housing professionals, facilitating meaningful exchanges with seasoned peers. The strategic decision made in 2022 to focus more on the young and early career emerging talent has proven fruitful. Furthermore we were very pleased with the very well attended conferences and topic group meetings.

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

EFL's membership trajectory revealed a slight downward trend, contrasting with the pre-pandemic growth. However, in 2023, we observed a relative stabilisation, with a modest decline in numbers. Notably, existing members demonstrated a heightened level of commitment. The downward trend nearly halted by 2024, allowing us to welcome new members once more, reflecting growing interest from diverse countries. At the close of 2023, EFL comprised 28 paying housing provider members and 20 paying corporate associates. Additionally, 17 universities remain actively engaged with EFL. This year's developments underscore our commitment keeping a vibrant community of housing professionals, driving positive change in the sector

POLICY FOCUS IN 2023

In the preceding year, EFL directed significant attention towards the social dimension of housing. This strategic emphasis responded to members' aspirations to enhance social performance, a key tenet of our ESG policy framework. Within this overarching theme, a comprehensive study spearheaded by our Italian affiliate FHS - Fondazione Housing Sociale - delved into the measurability of social investments among our members. This research, centred on measuring Social Impact, showed notable disparities in how countries and organisations define and evaluate social impact. Mainly because the social priorities and specific ambitions of our members were different and these diversified also from cities like Milan, Paris, Dublin or London. The findings were presented at a well-attended event in London, under the stewardship of John Stevens, topic group leader Social Domain.

Moreover, the agendas of EFL's flagship conferences in Paris (spring) and Belfast (autumn) revolved around the central theme of 2023. In Paris, we deliberated on the global significance of social housing, engaging participants from Asia, Africa, South America and the US. Meanwhile, in Belfast, we responded to the demographic shift by establishing a new working group dedicated to fostering Age-Friendly living

environments. In essence, our policy narrative was encapsulated by the overarching theme of “Living,” which supported our strategic initiatives and underscored our commitment to fostering sustainable housing solutions.

TOPIC GROUPS UPDATE

This year marked a significant expansion of our topic group offerings, with the addition of a fifth group to our network. At the autumn conference, we inaugurated the Age-Friendly Living topic group, spearheaded by our new member OVERVIVERE from Milan. This initiative, led by Tommaso Scalzi and Sarah Mitton of Clarion Futures, commenced with a successful digital kick-off meeting, drawing substantial participation before the year’s end.

TOPIC GROUP CONSTRUCTION



Housing Project Bonhoefferstrasse in Munich

In the scenic locale of Bad Aibling, South Germany, our member B&O Gruppe hosted the Topic Group Construction. The thematic focus centred on timber construction methodologies and the efficacy of emerging building materials. Over three days, participants engaged in insightful discussions and site visits, including a firsthand exploration of a large-scale renovation project in Munich executed by B&O. A building with green roofs, PV panels and other energy saving measures was visited by the attendees. Notably, at the B&O pilot site in Bad Aibling, the group examined three new residential buildings constructed from varying materials as part of an academic study conducted by the Technical University of Munich. The investigation delved into differences in living climates, including factors such as heat utilization, humidity levels, and CO₂ presence. Moreover, the session featured an introduction to timber

construction by French scientist Chazal. The final of the meeting included a dynamic workshop led by our member Casa Clima, showcasing exemplary energy-neutral projects in Italy and Germany. Notably, this gathering marked the conclusion of Eric Danesse's tenure as the topic group leader.



New Constructed Energy Efficient homes in Bad Aibling

TOPIC GROUP DIGITIZATION/EDG

Under the visionary guidance of Oliver Falk Becker and Roman Riebov, 2023 celebrated the Digitization Challenge as the central focus of the Topic Group Digitization/EDG. This innovative competition, organized by Gewobag and supported by EFL, invited pioneering startups to create ingenious solutions aligned with the ambitions of Gewobag and the housing association GBG Mannheim. Insights garnered from this challenge are also dedicated to enrich the knowledge available to EFL members. The inaugural meeting convened in London, hosted by Peabody and co-organized by Drees & Sommer. Noteworthy sessions explored the theme of 'decarbonization through digitization,' showing the substantial savings potential achievable through the application of AI in heating system adjustments. The significance of



Topic Group Digitisation/ EDG in London



Topic Group Digitisation/ EDG in London

these technical solutions in realizing substantial savings was underscored during site visits. Additionally, discussions went into digital techniques tailored for end-users, fostering robust exchange among attendees.

The highlight of the innovation competition continued during the second meeting in Berlin, where standout entries for the ‘innovation challenge’ were afforded the opportunity to showcase their solutions. EFL member Planet Smart Cities emerged triumphant among the contenders. Important deliberations on the imperative of data collection underscored the evolving landscape wherein housing corporations increasingly rely on data-driven insights to inform strategic decision-making regarding their housing portfolios.



Innovation Challenge hosted by Gewobag in Berlin

TOPIC GROUP SOCIAL DOMAIN

The social domain within the sector of housing associations encompasses critical aspects such as quality of life, resident participation, safety, and social impact. This group convenes, on average, once a year, often in collaboration with our partner organization Eurhonet. In 2023, under the chairmanship of John Stevens from Clarion Futures, the group hosted a significant event in London under the theme *"Social Value Measurement and the Role of Social Actors in Maximizing Life Chances"*.



Topic Group Social Domain in London & Thamesmead

The event commenced with an evening organized by the EFL Young and Early Career Network, comprising dynamic young professionals actively engaged in daily corporate operations. Their personal presentations, held at the Clarion Housing Association office, captivated a diverse audience.

Expert speakers provided invaluable insights into the theme, with contributions from housing associations within EFL and Eurhonet, alongside several social welfare organizations. A notable highlight was a visit to the Thamesmead district, immortalized in the film *'A Clockwork Orange'*, where attendees examined ongoing revitalization efforts. This immersive experience aimed to ameliorate the physical, economic, and social landscape of a neighborhood historically plagued by despair, crime, and socio-cultural tensions. The event included enlightening presentations on the essential role of housing association charities in fostering social sustainability.

TOPIC GROUP FINANCE AND INVESTMENTS

As Europe fervently pursues the decarbonization of its economy, the real estate sector faces a monumental task of achieving complete energy neutrality by 2050. The EU Taxonomy emerges as a key instrument, accompanied by a substantial subsidy package, aimed at greening the economy and imposing sustainability standards on major corporations. Notably, housing associations invariably fall under the scope of these guidelines, slated to take effect in 2025.

A noteworthy observation is the leading role assumed by the financial sector in this paradigm shift, with banks increasingly mandating sustainable criteria for investments through ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) considerations. The ensuing reporting requirements are integral components of the Taxonomy's broad mandate.

Given the profound implications of these EU guidelines, which closely align with analogous standards in the UK, they have emerged as focal points of discussion within this working group. Over two meetings held in 2023, in Amsterdam and London respectively, the group deliberated on guidelines and engaged in knowledge exchange with experts on Financial and ESG Regulatory Frameworks for Social Housing in Europe. The overarching objective of the topic group is articulated as follows: *"Identifying effective pathways towards the decarbonization of housing stock and housing associations, and elucidating strategies to achieve climate goals"*. This objective will be pursued through a series of six meetings spanning 2023 and 2024, dedicated to exploring all pertinent facets of decarbonization. Leveraging both external expertise and the collective knowledge of EFL members, the group challenges to foster collaboration across topic groups, exemplified by synergistic interactions with the Topic Group Digitization/EDG during a London meeting in 2023.



Topic Group Finance and Investments in Amsterdam

TOPIC GROUP AGE-FRIENDLY LIVING

Initiated by our new member OVERVIVERE, a leading Italian specialist in future-proof housing solutions for the elderly, the Topic Group Age-Friendly Living adopts a multifaceted approach. Beyond addressing housing options and services for the elderly, this group embraces a broader perspective encompassing multi-generational living. Inspired by successful models in Scandinavia, where mixed residential complexes cater to diverse age groups, the group aims to enhance overall well-being through social and technical innovations. With a vision of fostering inclusive living environments, the group aspires to spearhead joint European initiatives wherever feasible.

OUR CONFERENCES

In 2023, we upheld our cherished tradition of hosting biennial conferences, with the spring gathering in Paris and the autumn event in Belfast. Both conferences attracted significant attendance, garnered commendable ratings from participants, and offered a diverse program that resonated with members and associates from various backgrounds. These gatherings featured interesting keynote speakers, interactive workshops, updates from our topic group leaders, unveiling of new projects, the formal General Assembly, enriching site visits, and ample opportunities for networking. Culinary delights were thoughtfully curated by EFL and our hosts, ensuring memorable dining experiences throughout.

SPRING CONFERENCE IN PARIS

Our host, Paris Habitat, curated the most internationally designed conference to date, themed “*The Future of Housing: Social Change and Financial Challenges from a Global Perspective*”. This platform facilitated engaging exchanges among a multitude of speakers and attendees, thanks in part to Paris Habitat’s extensive international network, spearheaded by Bertrand Bret. The conference commenced with the



Maimunah Mhon Sharif (UN Habitat)



Prof. Carlos Moreno

opening address by Maimunah Mohd Sharif, President of UN Habitat, from the organization's headquarters in Kenya. Second speaker was Prof. Carlos Moreno, world famous urbanist and developer of the "15 Minute City" concept. Subsequent discussions included the financial challenges confronting the European housing sector, led by Housing Europe. Perspectives on global challenges in affordable housing were shared from Buenos Aires, New York, and Ulaan Batar. Renowned experts such as French architect Meriem Chabani and Jieun Kim from Seoul enriched the discourse with their insights. Participants also had the opportunity to explore two noteworthy projects of Paris Habitat: the Caserne de Reuilly and Glacière-Daviel projects. With over 100 attendees, including a substantial delegation from Mongolia, the event stood out as one of the most well-attended and diverse conferences.



EFL Spring Conference in Paris, hosted by Paris Habitat

AUTUMN CONFERENCE IN BELFAST

Against the backdrop of its storied history, Belfast hosted the second conference of 2023, themed "*International Responses to Shared Housing Challenges*". Hosted by housing association Radius, the conference addressed two key challenges: the implications of an aging population on the housing sector and the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI). Dr. Sophie Pelsmakers from Tampere University shed light on the demographic trends in Europe and the ensuing challenges for the housing sector. EFL members actively participated in panel discussions, sharing their strategies for addressing housing needs among the elderly. Notably, this conference witnessed the inception of a new topic group focused on aging. Additionally, the conference deliberated on the burgeoning growth of AI in the sector, with insights from expert Marcel Staub. Attendees also embarked on a site visit encompassing residential areas of Belfast, including the iconic 'wall' that divides Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods. The Mayor of Belfast graciously hosted lunch at the Victorian Town Hall, while dinner unfolded in the grandeur of the University of Belfast, marking yet another resounding success.



EFL Autumn Conference in Belfast, hosted by Radius Housing

STUDY VISIT FLORENCE

The annual EFL study visit took place in September to the city of Florence. On the first day the group attended an urban regeneration festival co-organized by Abitare Toscana. The opening event of the fifth edition of *"Many Possible Cities"* presented good practices from Europe of policies for the just and inclusive transition in urban regeneration. In particular, the cases presented explored the potential offered by temporary uses in urban regeneration to support attractive and well perceived transition.

The site visit to Sesto Smart Village provided the opportunity to visit some of the buildings managed by the housing association Abitare Toscana and have insightful discussions with the elderly residents. Furthermore, the EFL group was invited to a high level expert meeting about European projects and how the collaboration with EFL could be beneficial for the Tuscany region.



Study Visit Florence

WEBINARS AND OTHER EVENTS

Amidst the challenges posed by the Covid crisis, EFL took proactive steps by regularly hosting insightful webinars focused on specific themes. These sessions featured external experts, often from academia, industry, or governmental sectors, who shared their expertise with the EFL Community. In 2023, a diverse array of webinars covered topics such as:

- Preview from Topic Group Leaders about the plans in 2023
- Social Impact Research
- Rent Setting in Social Housing
- Learning Across Organizations: Mentorship models for social housing practice
- CHARM: Results of INTERREG Project on Circular Construction
- Social Foundations of EFL Housing Organizations
- Risk Management in Social Housing
- Affordable Transformation Strategies for Decarbonization of the Building Stock

These webinars enjoyed substantial attendance and significantly contributed to bolstering the broad profile of EFL, facilitating targeted exchanges of international experiences.

SUMMER SCHOOL - DIGITAL

Regrettably, the long-standing tradition of the annual Summer School for young housing professionals concluded in 2023 due to a lack of registrations for the scheduled edition. However, in response to this, we swiftly organized an alternative digital Summer School to ensure that educational opportunities persisted. Despite the inherent challenges of digital delivery, the event attracted a significant number of young participants through engaging speakers from various countries and interactive lecture sessions. While acknowledging that an intensive Summer School experience may be better suited for in-person interaction, we aim to revive this tradition with EBZ in 2025.

FINANCES

At the General Assembly in May 2023, the 2022 Annual Accounts, revealing a deficit of €3,500, were unanimously approved. This deficit, accounted for in the annual budget, does not pose any long-term financial implications for EFL.

BOARD

The composition of the Board remained stable throughout 2023. Eric Danesse announced his retirement, with his tenure extending until the end of the year. Additionally, Ben Pluijmers indicated during the autumn meeting his intention not to complete his full term, which extends until November 2026. The Board convened, on average, every six weeks outside of the General Assemblies, with no meetings scheduled for July and August.

IN SUMMARY...

In summary, 2023 was a year marked by resilience, innovation, and collaboration within EFL. As we navigate the dynamic housing landscape, our commitment to driving positive change and empowering the next generation of housing professionals remains unwavering.

...AND A BIG THANKS TO ALL FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

Many thanks to all our members, associate and academic partners, and guests from beyond our network who donated their valuable time, effort and ideas to produce this diverse and action-packed year of programming! We were delighted to see and hear from you all.



CONTACT/INFO EUROPEAN FEDERATION FOR LIVING
Official Postal address / P.O. Box 67065 / NL-1060 JB Amsterdam
info@ef-l.eu / www.ef-l.eu