

# SUPPORT FOR THE DESIGN OF REFORM STRATEGIES FOR COST-EFFECTIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS

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## D.1 Title 'Towards a cost-effective housing policy for Flanders and Europe'

### D.2 Short summary of the action

The proposed action consists of two main parts. The first part entails the development of a theoretical framework for the comparison of a range of policy instruments addressing housing needs in order to be able to choose the most cost-effective one under different (national) circumstances. The development of this concept will in first instance be based on theoretical and empirical literature. The second part involves the repeated testing of the concept with policy makers and stakeholders which will lead to adjustments of the concept in order to fine-tune it to respond to the specific experiences of a broad range of stakeholders.

The main question to be addressed is which policy instruments respond most effectively to housing needs in Flanders and elsewhere in Europe, especially those households at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Alternatives to be considered are cash and in kind benefits. Related questions are whether subsidies should be targeted towards a small or a broad group of recipients, and towards the demand or the supply-side of the housing market. Another fundamental question is how tasks have to be divided between market and non-market organizations.

Economic theory will provide the basis for the development of the conceptual framework. Since the late 1990s, a lot of research has been done on the conditions and effects of different housing policy measures in different EU countries. Some comparative studies bring the results of European Member States together. For instance Stephens et al.(2010) search for relations between welfare regimes, housing systems and housing outcomes. However, these studies do not address cost-effectiveness in particular and may not have allowed for the results to be appraised by the stakeholders. It are exactly those elements that we want to incorporate.

### D.3 Specific objectives

#### 1. Towards a more cost-effective housing policy for Europe

Over the last decade, homelessness and housing exclusion have become an increasing concern for social policy in the European Union. Social protection policies and programs include aspects of housing policy. Furthermore, housing policy can have an important impact on broader social

protection systems. Cost-effective housing policy has an important role to play in supporting progress towards the targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy, including ensuring that at least 20 million less people are living in/at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

There is considerable diversity in Member States' housing policy and the extent and structure of support provided to those excluded from the market. There are extensive differences between Member States regarding the extent and targeting of subsidies, as well as the balance between demand and supply-side financing. Current trends in several contexts include constrained budgets for subsidies to affordable rental housing (both on the demand and supply side), increasing pressure to rebalance subsidies away from home ownership (see EC policy analysis and guidance in the In Depth Reviews and Country Specific Recommendations carried out in the framework of the European Semester and the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure), and attempts to stabilize housing markets in the wake of the economic crisis.

Housing shows many interdependencies with the economic situation. The financial crisis of the late 2000's found its main reason in a crisis on the housing market. Residential building and renovation are an important source of employment and, as demonstrated in the wake of the financial crises, booms and busts on the housing market influence strongly unemployment levels and thus social protection costs. Well documented is the relation between housing tenure and employment, where homeownership discourages labour market flexibility and so employment. Good and affordable housing also is an important pull factors for new economic investments, as becomes clear from the key workers problems. What concerns government budgets, housing transactions and income from housing are a base for tax revenues, which however is often eroded by a multitude of deductions.

Interdependencies between housing and the social conditions are manifold. Bad housing conditions are a risk for health, have a negative impact on family life and on school performance of children. In this sense, a cost-effective housing policy reduces pressure on the broader system of social protection, including health care, long-term care and social welfare.

Housing is an important vehicle for individual households to build assets for extra consumption during the lifecycle; for example to accommodate health and care expenditures in old age. In this view housing policy can contribute to a sustainable pension policy and reduce the burden for public pensions (Groves et al., 2007, Toussaint, 2011). In times of rising house prices it was tempting to consider housing as a pension and a safety net, the global financial crises made clear that housing also is a risk in itself. The use of housing as a pension should be treated with care (Doling & Elsinga, 2013).

The European Commission estimates that 4.1 million people are homeless in the EU each year (SWD(2013) 42 final). This is partly a result of weaknesses in social protection systems, as well as broader housing and social policies. The Social OMC has addressed homelessness through various analytical and policy exchange instruments over the past 10 years. The recently adopted Social Investment Package (COM(2013) 83 final) calls on Member States to adopt integrated strategies to tackle homelessness, emphasizing the central role that access to affordable housing must play therein. Homelessness is also an emerging priority within the European Semester, with several Member States including Belgium reporting on measures in this domain in their National Reform Programmes to date. The European Commission's communication on the 2013 Country Specific Recommendations emphasized the need for several Member States to step up efforts to tackle homelessness (COM(2013) 350 final). The European Parliament has adopted a Resolution calling for a European Union homelessness strategy (P7\_TA(2011)0383), as well as on the role of social housing in responding to the crisis (P7\_TA(2013)0246).

And finally, the European Union is increasingly impacting on various dimensions of housing policy through diverse areas of competence including competition rules within the single market and freedom of movement, as well as in relation to social policy.

In this context, it is increasingly relevant to examine the cost-effectiveness of different policy instruments from a European perspective.

## **2. Feeding the housing policy discussions for Flanders**

Flanders, the largest of the three Belgian territories, is one of the most prosperous regions of Europe and has a good average standard of housing quality and housing affordability. But despite the high level of prosperity, for a large group of inhabitants the constitutional right to decent housing is not realized (Winters & Heylen, 2012).<sup>1</sup> In the light of the Europe 2020 Strategy and its Flemish counterpart Pact 2020, the Flemish government committed itself to undertake all necessary actions to decrease the risk of poverty and social exclusion.

For the future, the challenge will be greater than during the recent decades. Demographic changes and budgetary constraints demand more than before a cost-effective housing policy. Available evaluations of Flemish housing policy, as well by academics (e.g. Winters, 2013; Ryckewaert et al., 2012) as by stakeholders (e.g. Vlaamse Woonraad, 2011; 2012), show a strong need for more

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<sup>1</sup> According to EU-SILC 2009 data, more than one in ten people in the Flemish region (12.8%) live in homes with a damp problem, i.e. a leaking roof, damp walls or rotting door/window frames, causing severe risks for health. 5.6% of the population in the Flemish Region lives in a household for whom housing is unaffordable. Although these figures in general are better than the EU average, it is of special concern that problems are concentrated in specific market segments and among specific socio-economic groups.

effective public housing expenses. Available subsidies (in especially tax benefits) are not targeted to those in need of subsidies and are very unequally distributed (Heylen & Winters, 2012). Moreover, subsidies are mainly granted to homeowners, while most housing problems are found on the private rental market (Winters, 2010). Social housing in Flanders is of high quality, but the need for social housing (or alternative forms of housing assistance as housing allowances) is estimated to be double the actual supply.

Since the reform of the Belgian state in the 1980s housing policy has been a competence of the regions. Contrary to the preceding Belgian policy that was mainly driven by economic objectives, Flemish housing policy starts from the constitutional right to decent housing and assigns priority to the housing needs of low-income households. One of the difficulties with implementing the right to housing for a long time was that important policy instruments remained federal competences, in especially housing taxation and rent legislation. At this time, there is a historic opportunity for Flemish housing policy to change direction. In October 2011, a political agreement was reached allowing for the next (the sixth) step in the reform of the Belgian state. From the first of January 2014, rent legislation and the budgets for fiscal benefits to homeowners will be transferred from the Federal State to the Regions. The Flemish government can seize upon this transfer of authority to reorient its housing policy.

Another unique opportunity to start a debate is the preparation of the Flemish Housing Plan, a long term plan determining policy objectives and instruments. The ambition of the Minister is to work out this plan together with the main stakeholders and civil society representatives, starting with a profound re-analysis of the situation and an exploration of trends and challenges. Some public actions have already been undertaken in this respect, but the bulk of the work will have to be done by the next Flemish government, from 2014 onwards.

However, since tax-benefits for homeownership build upon a long tradition and are widespread, starting the discussion concerning possible changes in the system provokes emotional reactions among political parties and the general public. For a long time, this was under taboo. But the growing awareness that the cost of the current system will grow to a level that is no longer affordable for the government budget provides impetus for initiatives. In a recent communication, the Minister-President of the Flemish government declared the discussion to be open (VRT, Ter Zake, 16 September 2013). The day after, most political parties hurried to state their vision that the transfer of competence will have no implications for current contracts and that there will also not be cut in the advantages for future contracts.

The Flemish Housing Council, which is the official council commissioned to advise the Flemish government on strategic decisions in housing policy, has argued several times for a thorough rethinking of Flemish Housing Policy. In the light of the planned transfer of competence for tax benefits from the federal state to the regions, the Flemish Housing Council in 2012 made a very critical evaluation of the performance of the actual system of benefits and plead for a reallocation of budgets. However, the discussion on which alternative measures would be more effective has gone less smoothly. Contrasting viewpoints within the council importantly reflected the traditional positions of the stakeholders, defending the interests of the bodies they represented. Some attempts to objectify the debate foundered on the lack of an agreed theoretical framework and a lack of empirical evidence. For this reason, the advice of the council on the reorientation of the fiscal benefits for homeowners only included a list of complementary alternative policy measures without making real choices.

The Flemish administration is fully aware of the potential of the transfer of competence for housing policy and already ordered a research task aiming at clarifying the discussion. However, this study remains limited to making budgetary prognoses of the actual system and estimating the impact of possible reforms on budgets, prices and distribution of subsidies among socio-economic groups. A comprehensive appraisal of alternative policy measures is not part of the study. For such a research, international knowledge and expertise need to be brought in. This EU-call fits perfectly in the current policy research agenda of the Flemish administration. It offers opportunities to use the Flemish case in order to organize an international discussion that at the same time is of great relevance for similar debates in other countries.

### **3. Development of a conceptual framework supported by stakeholders**

Economic theory has the potential to provide the necessary conceptual framework for making a comparative appraisal. Welfare economics addresses such questions (see for instance Barr, Stiglitz, 1995). Although this approach has been broadly applied to evaluate and analyse reform in other welfare state activities (Le Grand et al., 1992; Curie and Gahvari, 2007), it is scarcely used in housing analysis (MacLennan and More, 1997). Some authors set the scene. Well-known by housing economists is for instance the discussion between Galster (1997) and Yates and Whitehead (1998) comparing demand-side and supply-side subsidies. Based on a literature review, Oxley (2000) compares ten possible housing policy instruments and draws conclusions from other European countries for designing a more effective model for the U.K. MacLennan and Moore (1997) discuss market and non-market provision and point to five areas that system designers should examine. A variety of arguments and considerations appear in these contributions, but unambiguous answers have not been found yet. However, all these authors are like-minded what concerns the importance

of the context in comparative evaluations. According to MacLennan and More (1997), the main problem is that empirical evidence concerning the impact of different circumstances on the efficiency of instruments in achieving societal housing objectives is missing.

Therefore we aim to, not only investigate the cost-effectiveness of the different policies, but also to incorporate the views and experiences of different types of stakeholders in order to increase the stakeholder ownership/support of the framework.

#### **4. The objective of the proposed action**

Within the light of what proceeds the objective of the proposed action is to elaborate a conceptual framework, based on economic theory and underpinned by national and international empirical evidence, that allows to evaluate alternative housing policy instruments and to draw conclusions concerning the design of the optimal housing policy systems. The Flemish administration and the Flemish Housing Council can use this framework for preparing the necessary reorientation of housing policy after the sixth step in the reform of the Belgian State. The framework will also be made available to policy makers, academics and stakeholders of other European regions and countries aiming to increase cost-effectiveness of housing policy.

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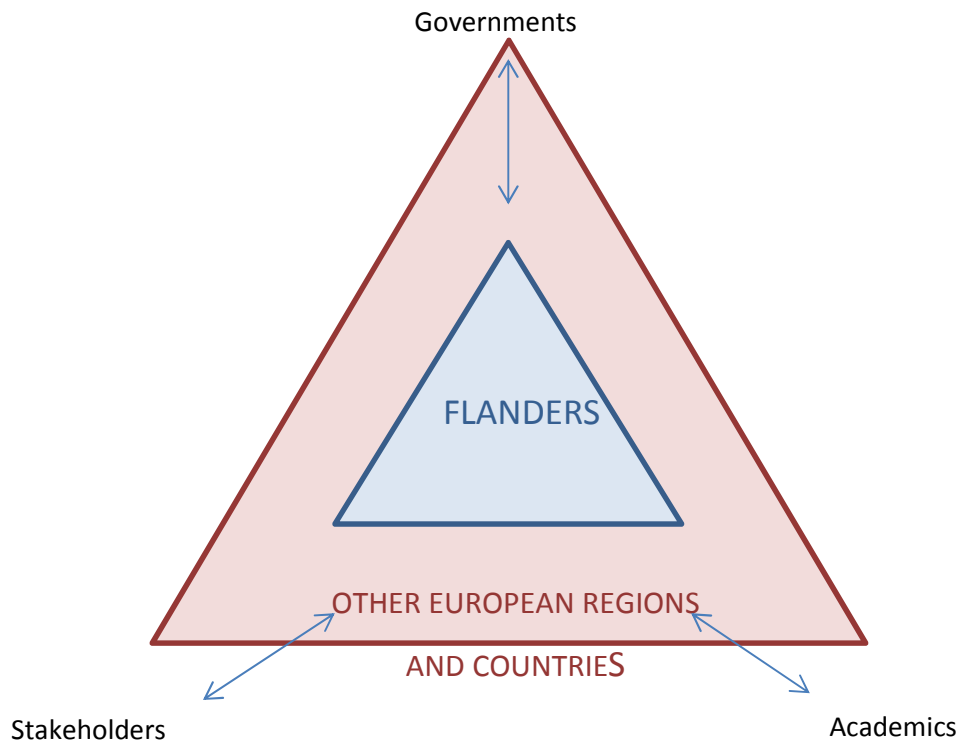
#### **D.4 Duration of the action**

Start: 1 September 2014.

End: 31 August 2016.

## D.5 Implementation of the action

**Figure 1** The action as a collaboration between three kinds of actors



The action is defined as a close cooperation between three kinds of actors: government, academics and stakeholders, each having their own responsibilities what concerns the preparation of housing policy:

- the government is responsible for preparing policy decisions;
- academics are responsible for feeding the policy discussion by providing theoretical frameworks, empirical evidence and policy evaluation (ex-ante and ex-post);
- stakeholders are responsible for feeding the policy discussion by providing their knowledge and expertise of the field.

We take these responsibilities as a starting point for defining the proposed action. The action includes five work packages:

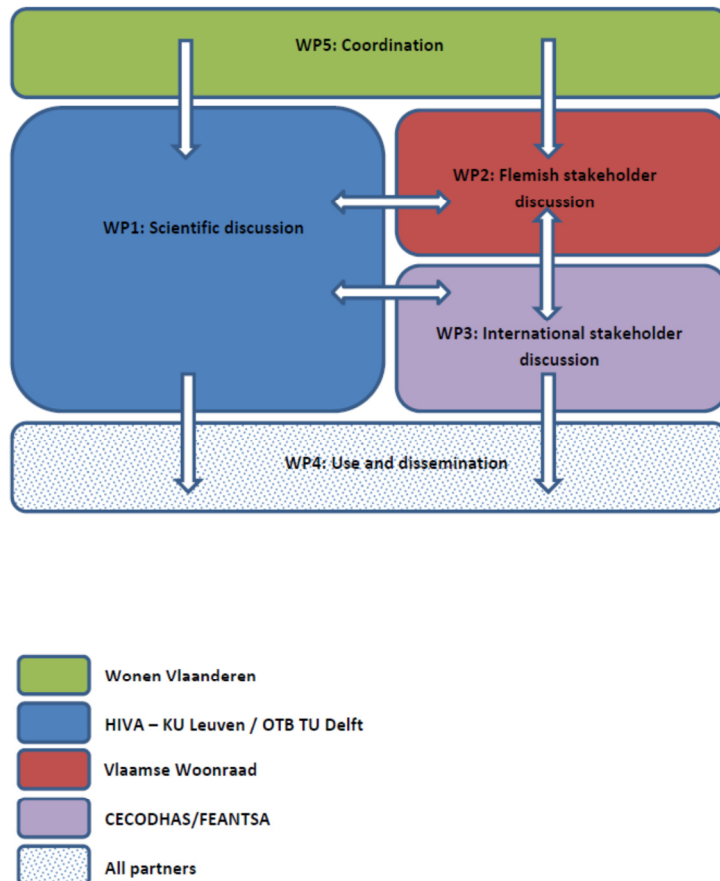
- scientific research and the organization of the academic discussion (WP1);
- the organization of stakeholder discussion in Flanders (WP2);
- the organization of the international stakeholder discussion (WP3);



- dissemination of the outputs to Flemish and international governments, academics and stakeholders (WP4);
- overall coordination of the action (WP5).

The relations between the work packages are shown in figure 2.

**Figure 2 Relations between the work packages**



**WP1: Academic discussion**

Responsible: HIVA – KU Leuven / OTB TU Delft

Tasks:

- drawing a review of economic literature concerning evaluation of welfare systems and the design of optimal and cost-effective welfare policies in general and more specific applied to housing systems;
- gathering of information and data from Flemish and international resources to feed the theoretical discussion with empirical evidence;
- development of the framework for appraisal of alternative housing policy instruments;

- presentation of interim papers at the ENHR Conference 2015 (Lisbon);
- the organization of an academic workshop with specialists in the field in spring 2015;
- contribute to the meetings of the stakeholder platform;
- presentation of final papers at the ENHR Conference 2016;
- contributions to the organization and the program of the final conference (day 1 and 2);
- contribute to the working of the steering committee.

#### **WP2: Flemish stakeholder discussion**

Responsible: Flemish Housing Council

Tasks:

- presentation of the project on a plenary session of the Council;
- establishment of a working group of the Flemish Housing Council;
- organization of the discussion within this working group, supported by academic research;
- contributions to the organization and the program of the final conference (day 2);
- contribute to the working of the steering committee.

#### **WP3: International stakeholder discussion**

Responsible: CECODHAS/FEANTSA

Tasks:

- FEANTSA and CECODHAS will provide feedback on the interim findings. FEANTSA will do this through discussion with both its Housing Working Group (a group of six national experts steering FEANTSA's work in the housing area) and the core research team of the European Observatory on Homelessness (a European research network dedicated to transnational research on homelessness and housing exclusion). CECODHAS will discuss interim results with its Social Affairs Working Group during already scheduled meetings;
- FEANTSA and CECODHAS will jointly organize an EU stakeholder platform with approximately 15 representatives of key housing stakeholders at EU-level, including International Unit of Tenants, European Union of Developers and House Builders, International Union of Property Owners, European Construction Industry Federation, European Council of Real Estate Professionals, European Mortgage Federation, representatives of DG Regio and DG Empl of the European Commission, MEPs active on housing, members of the CoR and EESC active on housing). The aim of this platform is to broaden the partnership and strengthen the support for the action and the later outcomes. The stakeholder platform will meet at the start of the action and for a mid-term workshop where the interim findings will be presented and

discussed. The stakeholders will also be involved in drawing the program for the international conference and invited to participate;

- FEANTSA and CECODHAS will jointly organize the first day of the international event in March 2016 and contribute to the second day of this event. This would involve mobilizing relevant participants (approx. 100) through own networks and other channels. Key targets include social housing and homeless service providers, participants in the stakeholder platform and their members, housing focal points from the Member States (responsible for organizing Informal Meetings of Housing Ministers), local, national and regional policymakers, researchers (via ENHR and European Observatory on Homelessness). The conference program will be jointly developed by all (co-)applicants. The practical organization of the event will be led by CECODHAS. FEANTSA will donate staff time for stakeholder consultation, steering committee and content-based work on the conference. The reason for this donation is that FEANTSA is already funded by PROGRESS to work on the relationship between housing policy and homelessness, and considers that this project would be an important step forward in this context;
- FEANTSA and CECODHAS will both contribute to the working of the steering committee.

#### **WP4: Use and dissemination of the results**

##### Tasks:

- Flemish administration:
  - o communication concerning the action to the general public in Flanders by website, newsletter, etc.;
  - o use of the results of the action for preparation of housing policy, more specifically within the context of the sixth reform of the Belgian State and for the development of the Flemish Housing Plan;
- Flemish Housing Council:
  - o use of the results in future advices;
  - o possible preparation of an advice concerning the necessary reorientation of Flemish housing policy, based upon the results of this project;
  - o communication to the general public in Flanders by website, newsletter, etc.
- HIVA KU Leuven and OTB TU Delft:
  - o communication concerning the action to the general public in Flanders by website, newsletter, etc.;
  - o use of the results in future research;

- dissemination of the results by ENHR conferences, working groups, website and newsletter;
- dissemination of the results to the academic world and the general public in Flanders and the Netherlands by own websites, newsletters, etc.;
- submission of at least two academic papers for peer reviewed international housing journals;
- the researchers will propose the Flemish Parliament to present the results of the action in the Housing Commission.
- Cecodhas/Feantsa:
  - dissemination of the results to members and other stakeholders by website, newsletter, etc.;
  - production of short articles for sector journals.
- Joint:
  - production and distribution of the final report;
  - press releases at the start of the action, at the occasion of the two day conference and of the publication of the final report.

#### **WP5: Coordination**

Responsible: Wonen Vlaanderen

#### Tasks:

- establishment of a steering committee for the action;
- presidency of this steering committee;
- overall responsibility for planning and follow up of the work plan;
- overall responsibility for the organization of the two-day conference;
- establishment of a website or webpage with a description of the action, all related documents and the final report (will remain online at least five years after the action);
- establishment of a SharePoint for communication and the sharing of documents between the applicants;
- contributions to the organization and the program of the final conference (day 2);
- contribute to the final report.

## D.6 Workplan

The action will take place from September 2014 until August 2016.

During the first three months, the researchers will start with gathering and studying data and relevant literature. The steering committee will be established and the Flemish administration will set up the website and SharePoint. A first kick-off meeting with the consortium partners and the EC project manager will be organized in September 2014. All partners of the consortium will inform their members concerning the action and distribute the information via their own websites and newsletters.

A second kick-off meeting with the consortium partners and the stakeholder platform will be organized in the third month of the project (autumn 2014).

By the end of the first half year (February-March 2015), one or more academic papers will be written. CECODHAS and FEANTSA will give feedback on the academic papers. The researchers will integrate the comments and recommendations in their work. These papers can be presented at ENHR 2015 (beginning of July 2015).

The Flemish stakeholder discussion will start at the beginning of spring 2015. The action will be presented at a plenary session of the Flemish Housing Council (late March 2015) and shortly after that a working group of the Flemish Housing Council will be established.

An academic workshop will be organized in May 2015. For this workshop six international experts on welfare economics and/or housing will be invited in Leuven to discuss the draft framework for evaluation of alternative housing policy instruments. The experts cited in D.3 are potential participants, but probably other names can come forward from the literature review. By the end of May 2015 an interim report will be available.

The international stakeholder platform will meet in July-August 2015. The main purpose of this meeting is to discuss the interim report and make recommendations for the program and participants of the international conference held in March 2016.

The beginning of the second year of the project (period from September to December of 2015) will be used for further development of the framework for evaluation of alternative housing policy instruments and for the organization of the international conference. All partners of the consortium will use their networks to mobilize a large group of potential participants. Members of the stakeholder platform will be asked to do the same.

The international conference will take place in March 2016 in Brussels and will last two days. The first day is targeted towards an international public of academics and stakeholders. Approximately 100 participants are expected. Translations will be provided for English, French and German. The second day is targeted towards mainly a Flemish public and the language will be Dutch, except for the international speakers. Here 200 participants are expected. On the program of both days there will be presentations from the researchers and reactions of the stakeholders. Policy makers will be asked to respond to the proposals and viewpoints.

During the rest of the project (March 2016 to August 2016) all the material gathered during the conferences and workshops will be processed, resulting in the last months in submission of articles for international peer reviewed housing journals and in a final report with contributions from all consortium partners.

Publication of the final report on the action website is planned by the end of August 2016. All consortium partners will inform their members concerning the outcomes of the action and distribute the report via their own websites and newsletters. From then on, the results are available for all potential users.

The tables below show the timeline of the action. Each row represents a work package; the numbers in the table represent the milestones. The colours refer to the responsible bodies and are similar as used in figure 2.

2014		2015			2016						
sep-oct	nov-dec	jan-mar	apr-jun	jul-sep	oct-dec	jan-mar	apr-jun	jul-aug			
		1.1	1.2/1.3	1.4		1.5	1.6	1.7	WP1: scientific discussion		
		2.1	2.2			2.3		2.4	WP2: Flemish stakeholder discussion		
3.1a	3.1b		3.2	3.3		3.4		3.5	WP3: International stakeholder discussion		
4.1				4.2			4.3	4.4	4.5...	WP4: use/dissemination	
5.1, 5.2						5.3		5.4	WP5: coordination		

Milestones	Target groups
1.1 Paper on the literature review (+ presentation possibilities to be investigated)	Academics
1.2 Academic workshop	Academics
1.3 Interim report	
1.4 Paper with framework for evaluation of alternative housing policy instruments at ENHR 2015	Academics, policy makers, stakeholders
1.5 Contributions to content and organisation of the international conference, day 1 and 2	Academics
1.6 Submission of articles for international journals	Academics
1.7 Final report	Academics, policy makers, stakeholders
2.1 Presentation of the project on a plenary session of the Flemish Housing Council	Flemish stakeholders
2.2 Establishment of a working group of the Flemish Housing Council	Flemish stakeholders
2.3 Contributions to content and organisation of the international conference, day 2	Academics, policy makers, stakeholders
2.4 Contributions to the final report	Academics, policy makers, stakeholders
3.1a Kick-off meeting with consortium partners and EC project manager	
3.1b Kick-off meeting with consortium partners and stakeholder platform	International stakeholders
3.2 Feedback of FEANTSA and CECODHAS on papers/interim report	
3.3 Discussion with the EU stakeholder platform	
3.4 Organisation and contributions to the international conference, day 1	Academics, policy makers, stakeholders
3.5 Contributions to the final report	Academics, policy makers, stakeholders
4.1 Communication concerning the action	General public
4.2 Communication at ENHR 2015	Academics
4.3 Communication at ENHR 2016	Academics
4.4 Publication and submission of articles	Academics
4.5 Use of results in future policy advices, academic work etc.	Academics, policy makers, stakeholders
5.1 Establishment of steering committee	
5.2 Establishment of website concerning the action and a sharepoint for international communication	General public
5.3 Contributions to the content and organisation of the international conference, day 2	Academics, policy makers, stakeholders
5.4 Contributions to the final report	

## D.7 Subcontract

There will be no subcontracting.

## D.8 Timetable for action events

Start date	End date	Venue	Type of event
25/9/2014	25/9/2014 (1 day)	Brussels	Kick-off meeting with consortium partners and DG Employment, social affairs and inclusion
Autumn 2014 (date TBC)	Autumn 2014 (1 day)	Brussels	Meeting with consortium partners and EU stakeholder platform
26/3/2015	26/3/2015	Brussels	Plenary session of Flemish Housing Council
9/4/ 2015	9/4/ 2015 (several meetings)	Brussels	Establishment of Flemish Housing Council working group
5/5/2015	5/5/ 2015 (1 day)	Leuven	Academic workshop
1/7/2015	3/7/2015	Lisbon	ENHR Conference 2015
Summer 2015 (date TBC)	Summer 2015 (1 day)	Brussels	Meeting of the EU stakeholder platform
12/5/2016	13/5/ 2016 (2 days)	Brussels	Two-day international conference
1/7/2016	3/7/2016	??	ENHR Conference 2016
End August 2016	End August 2016	Brussels	Press release final report

Note: action event dates in the timetable are preliminary target dates. Exact dates may differ slightly.

## D.9 Roles and responsibilities

Each work package is assigned to one or two co-applicants who are very well qualified for this. These applicants will ask their own members and in their network to participate in the action.

- WP1 will be carried out joint by HIVA – KU Leuven and TU Delft. HIVA is a multidisciplinary research institute specialized in academic and policy-oriented research and with a good track record concerning housing research. HIVA is also coordinating the Policy Research Centre Housing (Steunpunt Wonen), a partnership of researchers from a range of academic disciplines assigned by the Flemish government to gather and analyse objective data on the housing market and housing policy in Flanders. The research institute OTB part of Delft University of Technology. The institute specializes in independent research and consultancy in the field of housing, construction and the built environment. OTB is involved in a wide range of national and international housing research and runs the secretariat of the European Network for Housing Research (ENHR). Both research institutes are active members of the ENHR.
- WP2 will be carried out by the Flemish Housing Council (Vlaamse Woonraad), which is the official council commissioned to advise the Flemish government on strategic decisions in housing policy. The council is composed of independent housing experts, local authorities and a wide range of organizations involved in housing policy (e.g. developers and house builders, tenants unions, social housing providers).
- WP3 will be carried out joint by CECODHAS and FEANTSA. FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless is a European non-governmental organization. It aims to prevent and alleviate the poverty and social exclusion of people threatened by or living in homelessness. FEANTSA currently has more than 130 member organizations, working in 30 European countries, of which 25 EU Member States. FEANTSA's members are national or regional federations of homeless service providers. FEANTSA works in close co-operation with public authorities and policymakers at local, regional, national and EU-level, as well as with partners in relevant neighbouring sectors such as housing, health and employment. Established in 1988, CECODHAS Housing Europe is the European Federation of Public, Cooperative & Social Housing - a network of 45 national and regional federations which together gather about 41 400 public, voluntary and cooperative housing providers in 19 countries. Altogether they manage over 27 million homes, about 12% of existing dwellings in the EU.
- All (co-) applicants will make use of their networks to distribute and guarantee the use of the results of the action in WP4.



- The action is coordinated by the Flemish administration (WP5).

As figure 2 shows, the work packages are closely linked. For this reason a close collaboration between all applicants will be necessary. A steering committee with representatives of each applicant will be established. We expect this group will meet in Brussels 6 times during the action. A SharePoint will be created to communicate between the partners and to share documents.

#### **D.10 Target groups**

The proposed action is targeted at several groups: policy makers, stakeholders, academics and the EU population in general.

Using the conceptual framework, policy makers both the politicians who take the decisions as well as the officials who prepare the policy decisions will be better equipped to define housing policy goals, to evaluate alternative housing policy instruments and to prepare decisions on this. Since the proposed action involves discussions of the matter with a broad range of stakeholders in Flanders, policy decisions will better reflect the needs and expectations of the stakeholders. In other regions and Member States the developed framework can support similar discussions between policy makers and stakeholders.

Also stakeholders themselves will be better equipped to discuss these matters with the policy makers. The action will provide tools for facilitating critical review of stakeholders' policy views and for appraisal of alternative measures. This holds for a wide range of stakeholders both on the demand-side as well as on the supply side. At the demand-side the most important stakeholders are organizations representing tenants, homeowners, poor people, homeless persons, ... At the supply side there is the building industry, the mortgage market, the financial sector and the social housing sector.

Academics are a specific target group of this action. International housing literature points to a shortage of empirical evidence concerning the impact of different circumstances on the efficiency of housing policy instruments in achieving societal housing objectives and to the need for a shared conceptual framework for making a comparative appraisal. The action aims to fill this gap in literature and to be a stepping stone in the development of such a framework in housing research.

The ultimate target group for this action is the population of the EU in general. Policy is aimed at improving their housing conditions, not limited to those households at risk of poverty and homeless persons, but also those living in bad quality housing and generally those that wish to make their house more sustainable. All these groups will benefit from a more cost-effective housing policy.

### **D.11 Transnational dimension**

The transnational dimension will be strengthened by the involvement of CECODHAS and FEANTSA whose membership and satellite organs (such as the European Observatory on Homelessness) cover the majority of Member States as well as other PROGRESS participating countries. The work with the EU stakeholder's platform will further ensure that the project and its outcomes are developed in a transnational perspective, as these stakeholders are membership organizations covering a range of EU countries.

The European conference will reach out to a broad range of stakeholders from all Member States. FEANTSA and CECODHAS will help to ensure this using their network coverage. A particular effort will be made to engage policymakers from different Member States, including the housing focal points, so as to strengthen EU-level mutual learning and transnational exchange on housing policy.

The research will have a strong comparative and transnational element. The European Network for Housing Research (ENHR) offers an excellent platform for this. HIVA is member of ENHR and participates in the yearly conferences and in several working groups. The Director of OTB, Peter Boelhouwer, is president of ENHR and OTB takes care of the ENHR administration and the ENHR Newsletter. Moreover, OTB researchers are prominent in several transnational research projects, for instance within the Framework Program. There will be two possibilities to participate in the ENHR Conference, namely in 2015 (Lisbon) and in 2016 (see D.8 Timetable). Additionally, an academic workshop will be organised in Leuven, with academics from other European countries.

The involvement of TU Delft will also allow to link the discussion in Flanders with the discussion in the Netherlands. Although housing market and housing policy in Flanders and the Netherlands differ widely, there are several common policy discussions going on, as on the necessary reform of the fiscal treatment of homeownership and the future of social housing. The housing researchers of KU Leuven en TU Delft have a tradition of collaboration since 2004 and published several joint articles comparing the Flemish and the Dutch housing situation and housing policy. These joint analyses of the situation in both countries offers a perfect base for further developing their insight into the advantages and disadvantages of their neighbouring housing systems. TU Delft researchers will also use their contacts with the Dutch administration, politicians and stakeholders to stimulate the Dutch participation in the international conference.

The issue of cost-effective housing policy is of interest to a wide range of Member States in a context of constrained resources and challenges around housing affordability, accessibility, homelessness and housing exclusion. A number of Member States have recently introduced reforms to demand and/or supply-side subsidies in housing policy. Member States which currently have very limited

housing policies are looking for effective approaches to tackle housing poverty and homelessness. Those with well-established policies are currently facing challenges in terms of maintaining them. Furthermore, the EU is increasingly active in the housing field, for example the European Commission now carries out In Depth Reviews which include indicators on housing and issues Country Specific Recommendations relating to housing (Netherlands, Sweden, UK in 2013). In this context, Member States need evidence about cost-effectiveness of different types of housing intervention.

#### **D.12 Arrangements for monitoring / evaluation**

The planning and progress of the action will be monitored and steered by a small group of delegates from the consortium. The group will set up a digital platform to communicate and to share documents. At crucial moments in the timeline, the group will have short meetings in Brussels. Since all partners have their main offices in or near Brussels, this can be organized in an efficient way.

The EU stakeholder platform will discuss interim reports and formulate recommendations for progress of the action.

Workshops and conferences will be evaluated shortly after they took place. For smaller events (e.g. workshops or meetings of the stakeholder platform), evaluation of the event will be a standard item on the agenda. For the larger events participants will be questioned about their satisfaction by means of a short questionnaire. The results will be used by the steering committee for organizing the next events.

Permanent academic evaluation of the scientific research is included in the action by means of the academic workshops and participation in the international academic conferences. It is also part of the review process included in academic publishing of the outputs.

#### **D.13 Added value/innovativeness**

At European level, the project is innovative because there is currently a lack of literature on the cost-effectiveness of housing interventions as an element of social protection. This is urgently needed at a time when social protection and housing policies face a number of challenges, including growing levels of homelessness and housing exclusion, a growing number of EU citizens facing housing-cost overburden, constrained budgets for subsidies to affordable rental housing (both on the demand and supply-side) and the need to stabilize housing markets in the wake of the economic crisis.

The outcomes can support decision-making in the wake of the European Commission's Country Specific Recommendations and In Depth Reviews on broader housing market issues. They can also

support Member States to implement the recommendations relating to confronting homelessness which are laid out in the Social Investment Package.

At regional level, the project will provide evidence to support policy making in the context of historic opportunity to design new housing policy in Flanders

#### **D.14 Expected results**

##### **The expected results are:**

- a website with a description of the action, all related documents and the final report (will remain online at least five years after the action);
- a framework for appraisal of alternative housing policy instruments that can be used in different contexts by governments, policy advisors and stakeholders;
- a report with the description of the process, the scientific discussion and the empirical evidence leading to this framework;
- an advice of the Flemish Housing Council;
- a discussion in the Housing Commission of the Flemish Parliament;
- several articles and papers in national and international journals and presentations at national and international conferences;
- several contributions to workshops and conferences organized by external organizations;
- several articles in the Flemish press.

##### **Lasting impacts:**

The main impact will be that stakeholders and policy makers after the action will be able to evaluate alternative housing policy instruments in a more objectified way, based on theoretical and empirical knowledge and on discussions with others. The experience from discussions with stakeholders within the Policy Research Center Housing and within the Flemish Housing Council is that providing this opportunity contributes to a more joint analysis of the actual situation and to convergence what concerns the most effective alternatives for the current policy. In this sense, it smoothens the path for a growing consensus concerning the necessary reorientation of policy.

#### **D.15 Use of the results**

The use of the results by the (co-)applicants is part of WP4. As is explained higher, several communication channels will be used to disseminate the results (academic papers and articles, a final report, newsletters, sector journals, ...). The Housing Agency – Flanders will set up a website with all the

relevant information concerning the action. The other applicants will lay links from their website to this action website.

What concerns the use of the results in policy, most important is that the Flemish administration will use the results of the action for preparation of the Flemish housing policy, more specifically within the context of the sixth reform of the Belgian State and for the development of the Flemish Housing Plan. The Flemish Housing Council can use the results in future advices concerning the reorientation of Flemish housing policy. The researchers will make use of the results of the action in future research; the international organizations in their future work at the EU level.

Apart from this use by the (co-)applicants themselves, the aim of the action is that also other researchers, stakeholders and governments will use the gathered information and the developed framework in their future work and so in the long run the action will contribute to a more cost-effective housing policy and a more cost-effective social protection system in general.

#### **Potential links with other EU-funded projects**

There are no direct links with other EU-funded projects