

National Action Plan against Substandard Housing

Discussion Paper

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Introduction

In December 2001 the European Parliament and the Council agreed to encourage cooperation between Member States for fighting social exclusion. In this context housing exclusion is a significant element in the frames of the target. The improvement of housing and living conditions of citizens, especially of socially vulnerable and disadvantaged people, is a basic component of the social inclusion policy and the ambitious programme against housing exclusion.

Housing is a basic necessity throughout the world; it can improve and ensure the quality of life for the individual, the family, the community. Poor housing conditions or substandard housing (SSH) can restrict access to safe drinking water, to electricity and gas, to a decent environment; they also create major health risks. The lack of these basic living facilities very often leads to diseases, intense discomfort, lower incomes, high health expenditure for public institutions, premature retirement, family troubles, etc. Housing influences a person's moral and psychological well-being and helps to protect the right to security and privacy. It is a decisive factor in family life, especially in the lives of women, and for sex equality, in children's upbringing and education (children usually spend more time at home than outside). It is a strong factor for harmony in cohabitation, for successful social cohesion, and for the exercising of civil rights.

A house is more than just a home. Housing is a special commodity, one that is often misunderstood or underestimated in its inter-relatedness with other economic, physical and social factors. Although housing is inherently a private commodity, it has a strong social component in that it provides safe shelter for all. According to the constitutions of most European countries and the Human Rights Declaration (1948) *decent housing is one of the basic human entitlements*¹. This political agreement is interpreted differently in different countries.

The mobilisation of government authorities to fight against less than decent, substandard housing is one of the key issues in the European policy against housing exclusion and social exclusion. Member States are proceeding in various ways against the degrading of housing (those who have taken this as a political objective), but it is recommendable to act in all countries and to exchange and adopt good experiences and practices in this matter. France is the host country for this programme; this country sets a good example in the fight to improve the living conditions of the population and especially with regard to people with low income, vulnerable individuals, and poor families, implementing tools against urban and housing segregation. The French authorities have acquired a relatively long social housing experience over the years, but recently they have been implementing their policy so as to enhance the measures for combating substandard housing. It would be useful to explain the main points in this policy and these measures in order

¹ *Déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme*, Articles: 13, 17, 25; *Charte Européenne pour le Droit à Habiter et la Lutte Contre l'Exclusion*, Article 1: " Nous défendons le droit de tous au logement. C'est un droit fondamental de l'homme. Ce n'est pas seulement le droit à un toit. C'est un droit à la dignité et à la citoyenneté."

to discuss them, to adopt and implement approaches for reducing and eradicating substandard housing in all European countries.

It is hard to give a clear picture in figures of the scale of SSH in each country and for Europe as a whole. Perhaps this will be possible in the future. In France so far, according to experts out of estimated 1,7 million dwellings classified as potentially unfit in 2005, 600 000 units could be considered as truly unfit². Most of the Member States (Italy, Spain, Portugal as well as Central and Eastern countries) are not able to supply figures. On the other hand there are various distinct emphases in the understanding of the phenomenon. Very often the numbers of SSH are calculated on the basis of heterogeneous, dissimilar indicators so that their estimations and figures are incomparable: figures are taken from population census, or from research surveys, or from special projects and programmes targeting marginal groups and marginal housing, etc. The regulations regarding the quality of housing – owned and rented - are not well documented in research across Europe. Statistics often give only a general idea about some variables of the housing conditions, but the identification of a 'substandard set' of indicators related to some units is not obvious. While some local or national studies have been undertaken, these are not accessible outside the respective national language and it is therefore difficult to provide a coherent European outline and perspective on substandard housing by figures. Different sources³ comment that in many countries regulations concerning SSH are not well developed and need special policy and attention. One of the main objectives of this Peer Review initiative will be to enlarge knowledge about the policy and results of actions to combat substandard housing in the Member States, to establish a policy of prevention and, through these experiences and measures, to outline new European perspectives for the social inclusion movement.

Part A Substandard housing: The policy debate at European level

Background of the phenomenon and modern political understanding

As an object of political interest and recognition, substandard housing is a phenomenon with a relatively short history, but with an old cultural tradition (we could at least mention the strong political concern in ancient Greece and Rome and in some later periods regarding secure, hygienic and suitable housing conditions). In modern times substandard housing was first discussed at the start of the industrialisation period in the 19th century⁴, in connection with the massive flow of migrants from the countryside to large cities and industrial centres and the growth of urban poverty.

² It depends on which figures are taken, whether those of a first rough estimate or of a second approximate evaluations by involved actors over the last years. PNLHI, 2007, *Identification du parc de logements en France*, Document de travail pour le Peer Review, Paris.

³ Edgar W. and Meert H, 2006, *Fourth Review of Statistics on Homelessness in Europe*, FEANTSA, Brussels.; FEANTSA, 2004, *Prevention and Homelessness in Europe*, FEANTSA, Brussels; Tossi A., 2004, *Unfit Housing*, FEANTSA, Brussels; Busch-Geertsema, Volker (2001) *Access to Housing for Disadvantaged and Vulnerable Groups in Germany*, National Report 2000/2001 for the European Observatory on Homelessness, Bremen/Brussels (FEANTSA).

⁴ In France started in 1850 by a Law against substandard housing.

After the First World War, with its great toll in human losses, in the 1920s and 30s the concern for providing simple but decent, functional housing in Europe was very strong; supported by social and political movements, it resulted in the creation of the 'modern' concept of a "machine for living" (*machine à habiter*) which first established the basic standards for living conditions in Europe (BAUHAUS). Without any demand on the part of politicians, at that time Le Corbusier made a study of his own regarding the widespread incidence of tuberculosis in the poor neighbourhoods of Paris and proposed replacing the miserable hovels (*taudis*) there with new homes in high-rise buildings, provided with elementary hygienic living conditions; he hoped thereby to safeguard a large part of the poor population against diseases and misery. He strongly believed that architecture and the technological revolution would bring progress.

A new impetus came after the Second World War, and authorities began discussing SSH; Europe then found a political solution to social pressure for the provision of a large number of homes, of which there was a severe shortage, and for decreasing the misery of the survivors: the solution consisted in industrial-scale construction of large housing estates and new dormitory towns with standardized housing. Despite the ideological clash that divided the continent at the time, such policy was conducted in West, Central and Eastern Europe alike. In all of Europe large housing estates were built, and over 70 million citizens inhabit them even today. When a point of quantitative saturation of housing had come, the need began to be felt for better quality of living conditions, for a more adequate living environment, so that the issue of SSH gradually came back on the agenda. In many countries it became a major political issue. Now the decision was to preserve the old city centers, not to renew them with new buildings, which was the initial idea after the war. Their rehabilitation began, while new housing construction changed its mass-scale character and limited standard of living conditions, setting higher requirements for healthy and secure habitation.

With the end of the Soviet Communist model of social development in the early 1990s, an important aspect of the political development of European countries became their housing policy. Central and Eastern Europe went through shaking economic changes in the course of transition from a centralized plan economy (or state capitalism) to a market economy. The change of ownership, the overall restructuring of government and economic structures, brought these countries to a collapse that involved mass impoverishment of the population and strong deterioration of housing conditions. The privatization of housing attained 95-98% at the expense of the dwindling social housing stock. In a short time societies of small-sized and poor dwelling owners emerged, people who cannot afford the upkeep of their housing, which is thereby quickly depreciated, which in turn carries the risk of homelessness for thousands of families. The time is ripe for a new stage in housing policy in these countries, and a new approach in the fight for prolonging the life of the existing housing fund and supporting the living conditions of the population.

There have been repeated periods of revival of the fight against SSH, and the trend points to a social regularity that emerges as a paradigm: in most cases the political decision to estimate and introduce minimum standards of housing conditions are preceded by disturbance of the social-economic situation at the macro level, by events that have brought about destruction on a high scale (war or economic and ideological perturbations), by intense marginalization of people and a combination of poverty and ruin due to unemployment, by low incomes of the working population and the growth of the class of the urban poor. These developments have been accompanied by a shortage, in terms of quantity and quality, of decent housing, by the lack of an affordable access to the housing market for a large part of the population. Very often, due to this discrepancy

between supply and demand for housing, the low income population of many European countries is forced to find accommodation in dilapidated housing. Landlord/landladies (*'les marchands de sommeil'*) in these cases are not concerned about upgrading the quality of the living conditions. They are not afraid they will lose tenants. Their concern is to draw profit from poor tenants, in which they are successful. Living in these dilapidated housing conditions, badly housed people suffer from deteriorated health, their children grow up in misery in an unhygienic environment, most of them are overcome by diseases, yet they can hardly find an alternative housing solution without the help of the authorities and the welfare state.

This general but classical and well-known social context of substandard housing has been reproduced over the years; in many cases the same model is functioning even now throughout Europe: even now European countries have migrants coming from the countryside to the large cities and industrial areas; all of these immigrants are seeking employment, better incomes and a higher living standard, but, usually due to their low incomes, they are forced to rent substandard housing that lacks security and an adequate environment. However these poor living conditions are increasingly provoking the attention and disapproval of society and are not being tolerated. Thus SSH is becoming a political problem that awaits intervention and solution on the part of the authorities.

There are no precise statistics about the quantity of SSH in Europe: it is not recognised everywhere. Obviously this is a neglected by many national authorities subject. Fortunately SSH was chosen by this Programme of Peer Review to look more carefully and profoundly at it as a phenomenon and policy concern: Estimations about SSH development are very approximate, uncertain and uncompetitive between countries because of the differences in the understanding of this very complex notion and due to the variety of indicators identifying SSH in each case. Some countries give estimations according to a national set of evaluated indicators like: number of illegal housing units, inadequate housing, poor dwellings, etc. As mentioned above in France the estimations about SSH at the beginning were 1-2 millions housing units, but after an investigation (not completed) of many addresses the evaluation of the number drops down about 3 times. There is an estimated number of SSH in Belgrade – about 15% from the total housing stock. In Bulgaria the estimation of the number of SSH is uncertain, because of the changing set and standards of indicators during last period used for the assessment of the housing quality. Apparently the number of SSH is closely connected to the notion itself - what is SSH.

SSH could be discovered in public and private housing sectors. In some countries public housing is regularly maintained and renovated as a rule or this stock could be put out of the discussed subject in this Peer Review. But it is not the case for all Member States: in many Central and Eastern European countries public housing for renting could be put to let in a dilapidated conditions or could be identified as substandard as well. However the majority of SSH cases could be found in private sector - urban or rural. Those housing units could be rented or vacant. To achieve to the relatively right number of SSH in any case it makes sense to decide what type of housing sector should be included in the estimation. Countries with high proportion of private sector evidently have more potential to identify higher number of SSH units.

The issue of substandard housing is connected with identifying the respective tenants as homeless (conceptual category III). According to the ETHOS⁵ understanding of homelessness, elaborated by the Observatory of FEANTSA, tenants in inadequate (unfit, non-standard) housing

⁵ ETHOS – *European typology on homelessness and housing exclusion*, FEANTSA (2005).

must be classified as homeless (types 11,12,13). They are unable to find better houses, to afford looking for such on the housing market. This connection between substandard housing conditions and homelessness is developed in many countries like: Italy, Hungary, France, UK, The Netherlands, Denmark etc. The most difficult cases of tenants in SSH are those of homeowners. They remain living in the degraded housing conditions of their own property, unable to rebuild or maintain their homes; thus they become homeless. Paradoxically, ownership of a home is not always the best solution to solve housing problems. Countries with a high proportion of home ownership still show a vulnerability regarding proper housing and homelessness as Portugal, Ireland, Bulgaria, Romania. Some of these homeowners come up against difficult situations and lose their homes.

Privately owned homes represent a significant proportion of the housing in most European countries, some of them are: Hungary, Portugal, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Italy, Spain, Ireland. More than 80-90 % of their housing stock is private and the largest portion is occupied by owners. This situation of homeowner occupation is similar in the majority of Central and Eastern European countries, but involves severe problems of maintenance and substandard housing. In France 57 % of the population are homeowners and a considerable part of them, especially in rural areas, are poor or unable to maintain their homes, most of which are identified as SSH. The same situation is in Slovenia, Bulgaria, Portugal, Hungary, Spain, Poland etc.

Table 1 Housing owneroccupation levels in selected European countries

Country	Owneroccupation in %	Year	Country	Owneroccupation In %	year
Albania	99**	2003	Estonia	72*	2001
Serbia	97,2**	2001	Italy	66	1998
Bulgaria	97**	2005	Finland	61	1997
Hungary	92,4**	1998	Sweden	60	
Slovenia	82*	2002	France	57	2006
Spain	81		Latvia	54	
Ireland	80		Netherlands	53	2001
Greece	78		Denmark	51	2001
Poland	76		Czech Republic	47	2001
Norway	76		Germany	41	1998
Portugal	75*	2001			
Belgium	74	1998			

Source: *Housing in South Eastern Europe* (2004), Council of Europe, Development Bank, The World Bank, Paris.

*Sources vary

** Figures correspond to private ownership

In many countries there are no precise figures about the proportion of homeowner occupation, which is different from home ownership; only a scrutiny of private rented and vacant private housing sectors could give some orientation by figures about the difference between the two terms. Even if it is not possible to identify owner occupation clearly by means of statistical data, it is nevertheless obvious that the amount of homeownership is higher than that of homeowner occupation: some owners have more than one house, and some houses are vacant or privately rented. These evidences make uncertain the supra-national comparisons of statistics for housing data so far but outline some tendencies.

Private Homeownership =
Private Homeowneroccupation + Private renting + Private vacant housing

The southern states of the EU and the new Member States have the largest share of homeownership and owner occupation in Europe. But this tendency is widespread all over the EU countries. In many of the Member States homeownership is increasing. Portugal is an example: it marks a continuous growth in the share of own housing in the total housing stock (in 2001, own housing represented 75% of the total housing stock compared to 65% in 1991 and to 71% in 1998); but in the same time increases positive evolution in the quality of housing, namely as regards to basic infrastructures and household amenities, although in 2001, there were still 10% of the total dwellings lacking at least one of the four basic infrastructures, a situation that is more serious in the inner regions of the country compared to coastal and urban areas⁶. The homeowneroccupation in Ireland is also very high and Ireland is not a country from the South. Obviously the North-South division is not giving the single relevant reply to the homeownership particularity. There are also some cultural backgrounds which are expressing this phenomenon. Why this process of homeownership is growing in Portugal and in other countries? Moreover, the question arises, is homeownership a general cultural expression of the population or a result of common political and economic decisions and goals? To deal with the question, we need to find a relative understanding of what does SSH mean?

The notion of substandard housing - "Substandard" or "out of dignity" housing? Cultural distinction

In the European countries there are many terms and definitions attempting to describe and denote in brief the quality of housing conditions as: *standard*, *sub-standard* or *upper-standard*. In some countries more than one or two definitions are in use. There are official and non-official terms. Official terms have a definition provided by institutions, or the phenomenon is recognised and precise, there is a concern about it. In a considerable number of countries (Czech Republic, Denmark, Portugal, Malta, Slovenia, Serbia, Hungary, Germany etc.) SSH has no definition so far. But the term is circulating with some locally adopted understanding - approximate and somehow unclear, according to some rules as: "any covered space with walls can be register as a house regardless of the type and the quality of the building materials, the existing facilities and the available infrastructure"⁷.

This paper is concerned with the negative aspects of housing quality, with SSH, its identification, registration, evaluation and future transformation to a better standard. But the understanding of the notion involves a comparison with the positive evaluation of housing either, both aspects are joint. If there is a substandard housing it means there is a standard one either. The definition of SSH is charged with cultural meanings and traditions as well as with political and legal aspects: each country has a local understanding about SSH, but nevertheless there is a global sense, connected undoubtedly with human beings, with their health, physical security, satisfaction of basic needs, a relative degree of privacy, and freedom to exercise different basic activities.

It is reasonable to start by clarifying the term '*substandard housing*': does this refer to physical characteristics of the house or rather to a purely human-social phenomenon connected with

⁶ Baptista I. (2007), *Homeownership and marginal Groups*, unpublished paper.

⁷ Fearn J. (2004), *Too poor to move, too poor to stay*, LGI, Budapest.

'dignity'? In French the term is '*l'habitat indigne*' which is a political term, not a legal one, and definitely refers to the moral and social evaluation of human rights and dignity. How can this concept be explained precisely, what is 'inacceptable' – in terms of the surface of things, the number of inhabitants per home, or by the availability of running water inside, of the toilets? How can the quality of a building be conveyed, when in fact it is an entirely subjective estimation? Which objective, physical characteristics are precise enough to express subjective value judgments? Are all EU societies sensitive to the conditions of substandard housing? How many countries are concerned about that policy? What lessons could be learned by this experience?

Presented in *Table 2* is a list of terms, which, though not exhaustive, gives some generalisation of the variety of terms in use in European countries.

**Table 2 The notion and the terms
(generalization of the used terms in different European countries)**

Positive quality of the housing conditions	Negative quality of the housing conditions	Comments on negative quality of the housing conditions
Standard housing	Sub-standard housing Non-standard housing	<i>Average, general level, guideline, model, norm, pattern, sample, type, bench-mark, rule housing</i> Officially introduced norms, outlining the general and average composition and the quality of the housing conditions in respect to the inhabitants (number, age, social strata, relations etc.)
Adequate housing	Inadequate housing	<i>Acceptable, satisfactory, sufficient, suitable, tolerable housing</i> There is a relative balance between the quality of the housing conditions and the needs of the tenants; adequacy of the house is responding to the general cultural and political rules of housing provision in the country
Fit housing	Unfit housing	<i>appropriate, correct, eligible, proper, qualified, right, suitable, well-suited housing</i> (Close to the term of adequate/inadequate housing)
Decent housing Worthy housing	Indecent housing Unworthy housing	<i>Reasonable, respectable, presentable, acceptable, helpful, pure, satisfactory housing</i> Decent is close to the understanding of 'normal', acceptable and appreciated by the majority of people; it is charged with cultural sense, general social perception of honorable
Housing with dignity (dignified)	Housing without dignity	Distinguished, honourable, stately, upright housing This housing is bringing a respectable touch of the quality of living conditions which might support the human being dignity. Strong connection to the tenant and his cultural and social well-being.
Sustainable housing	Unsustainable housing	<i>Constant, permanent, continuous, steady, long-drawn-out, conform to the nature, ecological housing, bio-housing</i> This type of housing is more related to the basic, natural provisions of housing conditions, which are respecting the harmony between human being and healthy physical environment

Positive quality of the housing conditions	Negative quality of the housing conditions	Comments on negative quality of the housing conditions
<i>Habitat digne</i>	<i>Habitat indigne</i>	Combination between <i>standard and decent housing</i> This French term is trying to combine the physical and human quality of housing conditions. (see the above one).
<i>Habitat salubre, sain</i>	<i>Habitat insalubre</i>	Habitat non-hygiénique, impur, sale, insalubre, incivilisé; Accent on the impact of the housing conditions to the health of the inhabitants (French term)
<i>Habitat en bon état physique</i>	<i>Habitat dégradé, délabré, dangereux</i>	<i>Détruit, en mauvais état, ruiné, abîmé, dégénéré, brisé, cassé, démoli, dégluqué, détérioré, mutilé, détraqué, endommagé, dégradé</i> Accent is put predominantly on the physical situation of the housing and the faced danger to live in because of possible physical decomposition and aggression (French term)
<i>Legal housing</i>	<i>Illegal housing</i>	According to the legislation the dwelling is unfit for habitation; (illegal occupation of a site, illegal occupation of the building, of the unit) Legislation is arranging the classification of standard, the legal criteria include the necessary standards for suitable housing quality, 'hygienic-health' requirements etc. (Italian term)
<i>Proper housing</i>	<i>Improper housing</i>	<i>Non-standard, unfit housing, dwelling lacking basic amenities, in serious disrepair, overcrowded, co-habitation, unsuitable</i> Accommodation in caravans, campers, containers, shacks, sheds, cabins, depots, garages, lofts, basements etc. (Italian term)

Obviously the terms for SSH are numerous. They have political, cultural, technical and linguistic overtones. A universal term can or will hardly be found at the European level; what is more important is to specify the outline of the concept: which are the basic qualities, which the necessary conditions, in terms of a minimal norm, that a home should provide its inhabitants today, and how can these norms and conditions be expressed in terms of technical and legal parameters? This is one question for debate, a question that will partly be our task to discuss during the conference. In pursuing this discussion, we could begin with some suggestions and experiences:

Box 1 Characteristics and dimensions of standard housing⁸ recognised in European countries

- minimum living surface/volume of the main room: in France it is 9 m² and 20 m³
- minimum living surface for a member of the household: in Italy 14 m² for the first 4 members and 10 m² for each subsequent inhabitant;
- minimum height of rooms: in France 2,20 m; in Italy 2,70 m (2,55 for mountain municipalities and historical buildings), Bulgaria 2,60 m;
- inside running water, drinking water supply; hot water: in all EU countries
- inside facilities (sanitary, canalisation, electricity, gaz etc.): in the majority of EU countries
- inside toilets: in the majority of EU countries
- with shower or bath tub: in the majority of EU countries
- separate, independent entrance onto the exterior in the street/landing, yard, terrace etc. – in Italy
- with direct light, insolation by the exterior – in France, Bulgaria etc.
- out of humidity inside and out of leaking in the housing by roof, through floor, walls, windows etc – in all EU countries;
- out of toxic materials in isolations, painting, building materials – in the majority of EU countries
- hygienic covers on floors, walls, ceilings – in the majority of EU countries
- out of strong smells and noises – in the majority of EU countries

The list of enumerated housing conditions in the standard home can be continued or changed, but in general these are the most frequently referred to characteristics of a standard home, as set by law in most European countries. In conclusion, we can tentatively assume a united definition of SSH as presented in box 2.

Box 2 Definitions

Decent housing is a permanent housing, providing to tenants a relative protection and security against natural and human intervention (aggression, disaster) combined by a basic set of healthy environment conditions and suitable comfort, all together forming a *set of convenient living conditions*.

Indecent housing is not providing to tenants the full basic set of elements of the convenient living conditions and environment described here for the decent house.

Standard housing is a decent housing providing to tenants a *set of basic, officially definite elements* of convenient living conditions.

(Decent housing could provide more than the officially defined elements and better quality of living conditions than the standard housing.)

Substandard housing is a housing providing to tenants partly the set of basic elements of the standardised elements of convenient living conditions.

⁸ Social Housing is not included in this concern.

Box 3 Target groups

Target groups of SSH predominantly are: poor households, vulnerable individuals, families at risk.

Unemployed
 Low incomes
 Monoparental families
 Single women
 Women under/after violence
 Elderly people
 Low capacity people, Desable
 Mentally ill and toxic abusers
 Young people
 Immigrants
 Retired

Target groups and housing occupation

Private homeowners of a house
 Private homeowners of flat in condominium
 Private owneroccupiers of a house
 Private owneroccupiers of a flat in condominium
 Tenants of privately rented houses
 Tenants of private flats in condominium

Box 4 Substandard housing typology

Private Urban owneroccupied house
 Private Urban rented house
 Private Urban owneroccupied flat in condominium
 Private Urban rented flat in condominium
 Private Rural owneroccupied housing

Generalisation of national experiences and tendencies

The study of the national experience of European countries in the field of housing standards for living conditions, shows that, since long ago, everywhere, and without exception, it has become a tradition and practice to introduce norms in designing and constructing homes. These norms reflect the culture, economy, and politics of a society, so they are specific to each country. But the differences do not obstruct the comparability between different standards. The norms serve to establish and guarantee elementary health and hygiene qualities of the housing environment as:

- acceptable surface area and distribution of rooms
- adequate volume of rooms and their height
- minimal supply of facilities: water, sewage, electricity, gas, heating
- requirements for adequate orientation of the rooms and sunlight
- size and closure security of windows and doors
- secure waterproof roof
- hygiene of the environment etc.

Without respecting such basic norms, no design can be officially accepted; permission for construction cannot be given, or changes made in the approved design in the course of construction without competent approval. In other words, this mechanism guarantees from the start the physical security, functional utility of rooms and facilities, and healthy conditions for comfortable dwelling.

Given such a strict practice and professionalism in performance, refined over decades of application, we could hardly expect there are still houses whose condition presents a risk for the inhabitants. But the facts indicate there are. Despite these strict measures, control and penalties, there are still physically dilapidated houses in all European cities, in most of which people at risk are living. This degraded state is due to the age of the building materials (which too have a lifespan), to the way the housing is being used and kept up, to unauthorized transformation and reconstruction that has taken place, etc. Thus from dwellings “within the norm” or standard, they become substandard. What makes things even more complicated is that some of the owners lose by this risk (suffer in their everyday life etc.), while others gain by it (*marchands du sommeil*).

It is obvious that the metamorphosis from “standard” to “non-standard” dwelling can be a very short or very long process, but it is inevitable in time, so that the adoption of a policy for “abolishing” or “eradicating” the dilapidation of the housing stock is not realistic in itself. This is a constant, dynamic process; all that is built gradually degrades. The purpose of housing policy in each country is to create sufficient, reliable in quality and durability, stable, functional dwellings, in order to justify the social expenditure for their creation (in all cases this expenditure is among the highest ones of the nation), enabling them to perform their social function for people in need of a home. No doubt, in order to achieve this goal quality housing must be built, using appropriate materials and construction methods; housing must be used with care and maintained. If any of these conditions are not observed, the housing deteriorates and quickly loses its initial qualities of standard, turning into a non-standard housing.

It is for such housing that the European countries are devising their own special policy, striving to restore the lost qualities of the dwellings and even improve on them, especially in cases of aged housing, where technical facilities are behind modern technical capacity and social requirements. The depreciation of the housing fund is a natural process, but it can be considerably reduced, hence the life of buildings prolonged. The upkeep and improvement of the housing fund is not only the responsibility of the owner, but of society as a whole. Hence the fight against SSH should be constant and strictly regulated in all countries.

While each country has its specific policy for protecting, carrying out and controlling construction, not every country has an established order for identifying, diagnosing, reconstructing and maintaining the existing depreciated housing fund. There is ample and varied experience in this respect, documented or practical. The approaches used are dictated by geographical situation, climate, the location of housing within the settlement network of a country, by culture and the traditions of the population, particularly those of the concerned tenants of a home and the community in their neighborhood. It is not the purpose of this paper to present the experience of separate countries, but it is important to trace the indicators that the practice of most European countries has defined as constant and mandatory in order for a dwelling to be in good condition and not fall in the category of SSH.

Set of variables for identification and evaluation of housing standards: are culture and dignity measurable?

The present sets of variables for identification and evaluation of housing standards is a suggestion constructed on the bases of the generalized experience of different countries. The predominant reference is to the French system of evaluation of SSH. Also included are some components from Italy, Germany, UK, Denmark, Sweden⁹, Bulgaria, Slovenia, and other practices in European countries. The variables are packed in 5 sets. The general expressed concern is to separate the different scales of spaces in order to achieve a specific evaluation of the environment:

1. The environment of the housing unit
2. The housing building
3. Particular housing risks
4. The occupiers of the housing
5. The environment of the neighbourhood.

Some countries make an additional division of the groups of indicators, which is justified in cases where there is an one family house and a collective housing building - a condominium.

⁹ Regarding the situation in Sweden see *Ingrid Sahlin*: "From the 1960s on, there were great resources invested in replacing or rebuilding substandard housing, through demolition in the 1960s and early 1970s, and during the 1980s there were large state subventions for renovating old or for other reasons deficient housing. For a long time we also had detailed building standards which implied that to get permission for construction, and to get subsidies for it, you needed to fulfil minimal standards regarding kitchens, sanitary equipment, isolation and the like. The result was that almost all housing were (and are) of good standards, although new problems have arisen in the past decade with bad building material, damp because of too much isolation etc. At the same time the standards regulation was loosened and the subventions reduced, which has reduced the state control. In the last few years the regulation for environmental reasons has been increased.

We have in Sweden quite strong regulation on buildings that are considered to be not fit for living (or for whatever purpose they are supposed to fill), so in this country you don't see many houses, barns or sheds that are empty or badly cared for. Owners will be fined if they do not demolish or rehabilitate buildings that are otherwise supposed to be dangerous (due to risk for fire, pieces falling down, environmental damage etc.) or the municipal authorities will take over. There is a Tenants' Act which gives the tenant the right to complain to a "tenancy court" if the flat cannot be used according to the contract and the landlord/landlady does not try to repair it. If a landlord/landlady severely fails to care for a house, the authorities can take over the management. "

Table 3 Environment of the housing unit

Subjects	Elements	Details and notes
Structure of the housing unit (stability)	Foundations Main walls Roof Floors Stairs Stage of the surfaces	Construction materials, building methods
Isolations	Hydro Sono Thermo	Roof Walls Floors Doors Windows Outside noises Inside noises Humidity
Technical equipment (functioning)	Water supply equipment Sewerage equipment Energy supply: electricity & gaz Ventilation Heating	Toilets Bathroom Kitchen
Hygiene, sanitation and health quality	No water infiltration inside by roof, walls, floors Ventilation of inside spaces (direct & indirect) Principal living space: direct connexion to the exterior, minimum surface Water supply system inside: kitchen & bath facilities (cold, hot water) Sewerage system inside: evacuation of used waters & toilets Isolations: thermo, hydro, sono Energy supply: electricity, gaz Heating: supply and evacuation of the used products	High of the floor: min 2,20 m- 2,70m Surface/volume of the room: min 9 m ² ; min20 m ³

Table 4 The Housing building

Subject of evaluation	Elements	Details and notes
Structures of the building (functioning)	Foundation floors main walls roof stairs	surfaces loggias, balcony extended elements
Construction of the building (stability)	Materials of the covert space Used constructive system for the main corpus	Antiseismic consideration Constructive resistance of materials
Protection and security	dimensions of the rooms height of the rooms lighting of the rooms secure doors, windows	Minimum surface of rooms Minimum volume of rooms Minimum height of rooms Orientation Insolation Locking system
Maintenance and use	Access to areas, spaces Cleaning Repairing Use	Access to cleaning inside spaces Access to cleaning outside spaces Access to repairing Use of the plot Use of the house Occupation of the plot and of the house

Table 5 Particular housing risks

Intoxication	Toxic irradiation (nuclear, chemical, plumb, paintings, asbestos)
Biological intervention	Presence of risky animals and insects
Fall down	Risks of fall down of individuals Risks of fall down of objects
Evacuation	Emergency facilities Waste evacuation
Ventilation	Ventilation of the rooms Ventilation of the premises
Pollution	Polluted air Polluted water Smell pollution
Humidity/Water infiltration	Risks by roof Risks by soil Risks by floods Risks by windows, equipments
Seism	Stability of the building/construction elements, Evacuation exits
Smell	Risks of biological degradation, waste smell etc.

Table 6 Occupiers of the housing

Members	sex	Age	Prof occupation	General health status	Links between members	ownership
Member 1 Member 2 Member 3 Member 4 Member 5						
Housing Building	Number of floors	Number of units	Number of households	Number of Children up to 16 y old	Number of disadvantaged households	Presence of other than housing occupation activities in the building

Table 7 Environment of the neighbourhood

General view of the environment	Space valorisation of the urban area General view of the outdoor spaces Disposition of the built volumes Occupation of the plots Greenery
Characteristics of the environment (aiming to identify dilapidation, pollution, degradation, discrimination)	Air pollution Noise pollution Smell pollution Greenery – quantity and quality
Socio-cultural ambience	Equalities and inequalities of households Social contacts and conflicts

Evidently in most European countries SSH is identified by estimating the qualities of the housing environment in terms of the physical security and health: whether some wall might fall, whether there is moisture or mildew caused by roof leaks, etc. Apart from this there are specific cultural and social aspects that are of a physical kind (for instance, in Italy, the minimal height of rooms in mountain municipalities). Some of the cultural particularities and traditions regarding housing might directly impact on its physical dimensions. Apart from culture, here we are referring to “dignity”. The estimate as to the qualities of the living environment in terms of the dignity they imply, depends on the social status of the inhabitants, their origin and views on housing conditions; it also depends on the family profile and the housing biography. In themselves dwellings are not worthy or unworthy, but can stimulate and support the dignity of an individual or influence him in a depressing and humiliating way, be an obstacle for him/her. In the view of households, the fight against SSH can be perceived in different ways. In this respect it is hardly necessary to apply levelling of standards. But a basic, universal program for standardization may be proposed.

European perspective

Contemporary European trends in housing policy after World War II went through different phases, but at present the idea is to preserve to a maximum the cultural richness and specific features of the past and of the authentic local environment of European cities and villages. The meaning of this approach lies in the framework of the policy to preserve cultural variety, the ecological and sustainable development of territories, and environment protection, including the economizing on energy and materials. This approach adequately fits the policy for coexistence and social cohesion of communities, for social inclusion. The pulling down of buildings is looked upon as an extreme measure everywhere.

Prevention is the new general trend in European social policy. While in the past the prevalent effort was to deal with crises when they arose, to deal with hard social situations inherited from the past (poverty, homelessness, unemployment, discrimination, etc.), today, when the healthy process of decreasing and eliminating these substandard phenomena is continuing, new safety and warning mechanisms are being introduced, thanks to which we may hope to avoid crises.

But in the case of SSH prevention can be ensured only if the housing that risks entering the category of SSH is quickly identified and measures are taken to renovate it before it deteriorates and falls below its standard. Preventive mechanisms can be devised and applied in the case of standard dwellings or those that have not yet deteriorated. This would be a truly effective policy, for in their cases the trouble has not yet occurred. The general conclusion is that the most effective prevention is for housing to be kept up and not allowed to deteriorate. Thus, alongside the renovation and reconstruction of deteriorated housing buildings in different countries, mechanisms are being implemented that prevent or slow down the process of housing degradation. The result of such a policy is a higher quality of the housing environment and economizing on housing expenditure for society.

Gentrification is a process often going jointly with the fight against substandard housing. This positive assessment could be kept if the efforts are orientated to keep the inhabitants in the area after the reconstruction. This is one of the basic concerns of European policy during the renovation and modernisation of the cities. The European perspective is to preserve the social variety and social mix in the cities, to avoid urban segregation and formation of ghettos for poor and for wealthy people.

Substandard housing as a political issue came up in Europe in connection with the specific housing situation in each country. But certainly all countries have in some degree been affected by the phenomenon, and each of them is seeking its separate course of interpretation and strategies. The political actions of countries clearly confirm the view that substandard housing is a priority issue for the EU Member States, but so far no common approach exists to tackling the issue, although there is obviously a need for a shared European policy.

Until recently the predominant concern in most European countries was to house risk groups of people that were not able to provide a dwelling for themselves through the housing market, or to supply the vulnerable and poor households or homeless with a temporary shelter or permanent accommodation. But at present the European governments are introducing a new policy stressing on the quality of the living conditions and on preventing degradation of housing conditions. This policy is being conducted chiefly in the Western European countries with a tradition of market-based housing policy and with available social housing stock.

The situation is different in the new Member States, which until recently were governed with a centralized plan economy. After their transition to a market economy and a strong privatization policy, they found themselves with an almost entirely private housing stock and insignificant social housing and shelters for the homeless and for people in risk of lacking shelter. There it is hard to conduct a flexible policy against SSH, because the societies in those countries are almost entirely made up of small-scale private housing owners. Their renting policy is very weakly developed; dwellings are small and often overpopulated. As yet few people have more than one dwelling so as to rent the additional one¹⁰. To a large degree the real estate property of owners in villages and small settlements is economically worthless, the homes remain empty and are not in demand on the market, unlike the excessive demand for housing in the capital city (ex. 25% of the entire Bulgarian population lives in Sofia) and in the large cities. It is precisely in these large urban centres that the social importance of SSH is intensely growing and it is here that the issue should become a priority for state policy.

Part B National policy and Action Plan against substandard housing in France

Understanding substandard housing in France: "with dignity-without dignity", "standard-substandard" housing?

The main function of a house is to provide protection, security and comfort in the life of its inhabitants. Housing can be characterised as 'decent' or 'not decent', as 'standard' or 'substandard' - according to an officially approved, set of selected characteristics and their measures or rates. In some countries, for instance France, 'dignity' is indicated as an important part of the definition of 'standard' housing: '*logement digne*' and '*logement indigne*' (literally means *unworthy housing - without dignity*)¹¹. In other countries, especially the Anglo-Saxon ones, the terms used are '*standard*' and '*substandard housing*' and the element of 'dignity' is not taken as essential to the term and definition. Obviously it is hard to make a distinction between the meanings of the two couples of terms, which more or less overlap in their content. Nevertheless it is important to clarify this nuance not only linguistically but also in its conceptual consideration.

The term used for substandard housing in France - "*logement indigne*" is a political term, not a legal one¹². The legal terms in use are: "*insalubre*" (unhealthy), "*inacceptable*" and "*dangereux*" (dangerous). In itself housing can not be "with or without dignity", but it could be such as stimulates the human dignity of dwellers, or else fails to do this and has an impact involving neglect and disrespect for dignity.

¹⁰ During the socialist period as a rule one household was allowed to possess only one urban dwelling (with restricted size) and one secondary. The precisions vary according to the stage of the period and the country. This situation as result in reality was kept for the majority of the households during the transition period to market economy.

¹¹ For this paper "*housing poor*" is defined as those who live in illegal or substandard housing or are homeless; living in overcrowded conditions, paying more than a nationally-defined acceptable percentage of income for rent; or unable to pay for utilities and/or maintenance. See in: Fearn J. (2004), *Too poor to move, too poor to stay*, LGI, Budapest.

¹² PNLHI, 2007, *Définition et connaissance de l'habitat indigne*, Fiche N3, Paris.

This definition of SSH used in France has two aspects, the physical or material one, and the moral or human. The physical description is the basic one and it is relatively clear and measurable: surface, windows, roof, water supply, sewerage system, electricity, etc. It is possible to prove a standard or a substandard condition of a house by measuring the set of variables selected for that purpose and objectively evaluating their rates. The physical characteristics of a standard house express the closed and covered housing spaces providing security, protection, and a healthy environment for the tenants as human beings. This is the starting point for identification of SSH.

The moral, human aspect is more difficult to describe and represent by measures and objective dimensions (for instance, how can "comfort", or "stimulation and image of a dignity" be expressed?). Difficult, but possible again by physical terms and other kinds of measures (e. g.: "overcrowding" by crossing variables like: housing surface, number of rooms and number of household's members, their sex, the number of children, etc.). However the human context, the moral meaning of living conditions connected with the dignity of the individual is purely subjective and very flexible and uncertain when the operational evaluation (diagnostic) of the housing is going on. It often turns out that moral and cultural aspects are far from being evaluated by the identification of the quality of the housing. (But they are in the set of documents for diagnosing the housing conditions in France. "*Grille de visite des immeuble susceptibles d'être déclarés insalubres*", concerns the physical aspect of evaluation. It is obvious that in other documents the social profile of the household is described (see *the 'Fiches'* in the French documentation). It is important to have the general social status of the household and its standardised housing profile in connection with the physical profile of the housing.)

As a cultural and political phenomenon SSH is linked to a specific time, country, social stratum, social-political system, etc. The housing standards 50 years ago everywhere were different from what they are today, and so was the social-political system. In Central and Eastern European countries the housing standards after the WWII were established according to a different framework of political concepts from those of the Western liberal market economy or from their present post-communist period. This flexibility and 'multifaceted' expression of the 'standards' touches upon a very delicate aspect of the topic, but there should be some preliminary value and evaluation on the basis of which some kind of housing is called 'indecent, without dignity', is said to offer conditions not respectful of the 'dignity' of the inhabitants. It is not easy to find the linguistic equivalents. However it is obvious that the general concern about this notion in France refers to the security and physical quality of the housing aiming to provide a healthy environment for inhabitants. French experts also have difficulties in assessing all the ambitious policy decisions relevant to 'dignity', however their research activity and results confirm that the practical outcome of the measures are more than the simple physical performance or refurbishment of the housing.

Political approach

The main purpose of this paper is to identify some of the key components of the French policy for fighting less than decent, substandard housing conditions of the social class of the 'housing poor', and to transfer the lessons from this experience to other EU Member States. In this context policy decisions are fundamental.

On the basis of the Law on *Solidarity and Urban Renewal* (2000), a *National action plan to combat substandard housing* has been set up in France since 2001. This plan was occasioned by several accidents that occurred in the winter of 1997-98 in Paris, i.e. fires that took place in old, dilapidated housing buildings and involved casualties, emotional trauma, and material losses. The subsequent urgent report on these events made it clear that the legal documents that should normally authorize public institutions to undertake quick action in connection with such events, for their prevention and adequate intervention, are outdated and ineffective. Until then the French authorities had not had a policy for opposing such unhealthy and unsafe housing conditions¹³. There was no public debate about applying special measures in the struggle against housing misery, and no purposeful funding of a policy against SSH.

Dealing with such cases of deteriorated yet inhabited buildings is a difficult and complex task in all countries, for the problem involves the issues of property, of holding possession and using real estate that may be public or private, of inhabitants of houses or condominiums who may be owners or tenants, of housing that may be in cities or villages. Regardless of the difficulties, the French authorities were very active and as early as December 2000 passed a "SRU Law"¹⁴, which entirely modernized the legal texts relevant to insecurity and unhealthy living in an unfit environment and housing, thus giving impetus to the fight against SSH.

At the same time this law was passed, a multi-annual plan was launched for abolishing SSH, a plan that was included as an element in the document (adopted at the European Conference in Nice in December 2000) on the general combat for drawing the socially excluded back to society. At first the plan was tested in 11 of the 96 departments of France, and from 2003 it was implemented in all departments of the country. Since 2004 this action plan has been recognized by the authorities as having priority and was included in the framework of the multi-annual work programs of the inter-institutional and ministerial activities. Currently some of the latter are:

- Plan for social inclusion of the socially excluded (PNAI), updated for the period 2006-2008.
- National plan on "health - environment", adopted in June 2004 and presented at the WHO conference in Budapest. The emphasis here is on the risks to health involved in inhabiting unhygienic, dilapidated housing; the intention is to set 20 000 dwellings each year in good repair.
- The plan for social cohesion, approved by the government in June 2004, for the sake of which a law was passed on programmed construction of social housing, including among its goals an enhanced fight against SSH through special programs of the National Agency for Housing (ANAH) for social targets of financial assistance.
- The program for fighting social exclusion (updated in 2006), coordinated with the National Plan for Social Inclusion, in which the combat against SSH is set as a priority measure for achieving access to some basic human rights; the emphasis here is on abolishing cases of habitation in dwellings inadmissible for habitation both in the urban and rural environment.

In conclusion it can be said that currently the combat against SSH in France is being led on the basis of specific political, legal and financial tools, complemented by plans and programs for

¹³ Pôle national de lutte contre l'habitat indigne, 2007, *L'Action contre le logement indigne: quelques résultats et chiffres*, Paris.

¹⁴ See the enclosed here references.

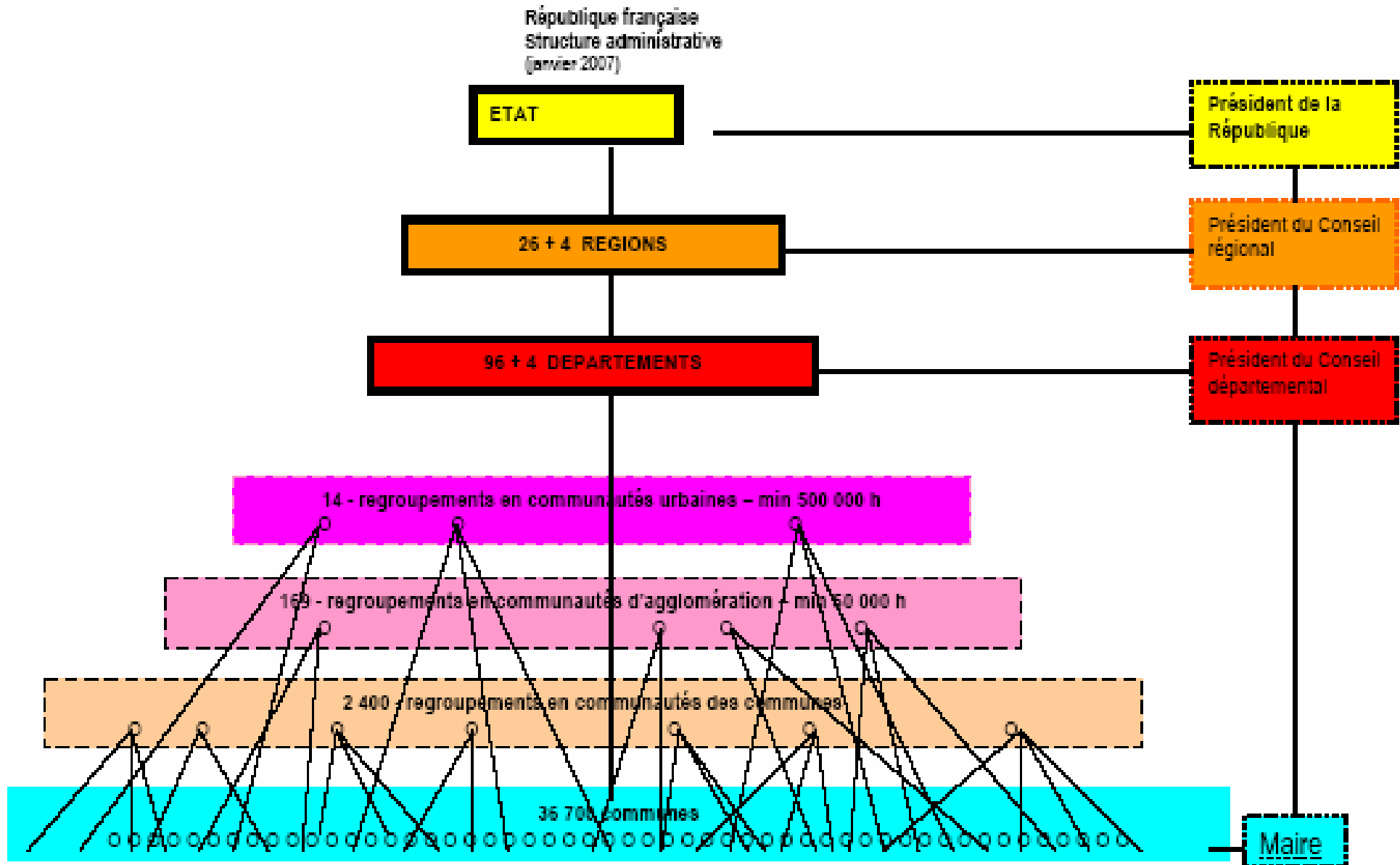
priority national action, the realization of which is continuing at the local level; the political solution has found the right context for beginning the pursuit of the set political goals.

Administrative structure of the French territory

A general acquaintance with the administrative structure of the French territory would be helpful for better understanding the way in which the activity of *Pôle national de lutte contre l'habitat indigne* (PNLHI) and the combat against SSH is organized.

France is a decentralized, non-federal state with a territorial structure at 4 unchanging levels, each with relative autonomy in making and carrying out decisions. In view of the large number of municipalities, besides these four permanent levels, since recently there are several levels of grouping of structural elements, which are temporary and are formed according to specific needs and interests. It should be noted that after 2001 their number has quickly grown. The groupings occur on a trade union basis and unite municipalities of different number and kinds. These associations of municipalities are important for the implementation of the National Plan for SSH, because the state delegates to them (and to the departments) the right to develop projects and programs for fighting SSH, and for funding and implementing them.

Table 8 Administrative structure of France



Legal provisions

The French National Action Plan comprises several parts. The *legal part* is a fundamental one. It is made up of a series of legal documents relevant to the way of establishing relationships between tenant and landlord/landlady (rights and duties of both); the physical condition of the housing, a diagnosis and evaluation of its characteristics with respect to the basic standard for housing conditions, and the interrelations between owners and authorities at various levels in connection with the qualities of the housing environment, the rights of the separate institutions to demand improvement of the conditions of housing, to assist the weak and vulnerable, to control the implementation of the orders and prescriptions, and to penalize (which may include expropriation) those who do not obey the orders of the public authorities.

The legal documents used as important instruments in the fight against SSH can be briefly listed:

- 1970 - *La "Loi Vivien"*, amendments in 2006 – concerning expropriation of housing;
- 31 mai 1990 – *La "Loi Besson"* – right to housing, programs for helping disadvantaged people (PDALPD), creation of Housing Funds for Solidarity (FSL);
- 29 juillet 1998 – *La "Loi de lutte contre les exclusions"*, concerning social housing (reinforcing the right to housing for the poor, provision of permanent housing for the homeless);
- 13 décembre 2000 - *La "Loi SRU"*, regarding solidarity and urban renewal, aiming at a radical modernisation of documents relative to risky housing; establishment of relations between landlord/landladies and tenants in such housing; obligation for cities to offer 20 % rented social housing;
- 18 janvier 2005 – *La "Loi de programmation pour la cohésion sociale"*, about construction of social housing for renting and of shelters for emergency accommodation;
- 15 décembre 2005 – *Prescription about modifications and adjustments of procedures* regarding dilapidated, risky buildings combined with Rules for Housing Construction;
- 13 Juillet 2006 – *La "Loi ENL"*, national concern about housing, reinforcing the role of PDALPD; taking into account the SSH issue in the plans and local housing programmes; establishment of district observatories for substandard housing;
- 5 mars 2007: *La loi instituant un droit au logement opposable*.

Given the existence of legal tools that have been in force for decades, it can hardly be said that the political decision to protect and assist poor families that are vulnerable with respect to housing, has started in France in 2001. This legal policy has many aspects which permit combining particular legal cases that abound in practice.

It should be stressed that in France, the State, represented by the Ministry of Housing and City, makes political decisions about housing conditions of citizens and is responsible for the implementation of these decisions. In many European countries the State shifts the responsibilities regarding the housing stock on to local government. But the local authorities for its part do not have sufficient capacity, qualified cadres, specialized institutions, services or a sufficient budget to manage this responsibility, so that in such countries the problems of the housing environment are considerable. Local government in France is the executor, the transmission and the collaborator of the State with regard to housing problems.

A noteworthy law is that envisaging the expropriation of homes. Such a legal tool does not exist in many EU countries – in some Member States it is considered archaic, in others - exotic. As for Central and East European countries, it can hardly find acceptance there for social-psychological reasons connected with the trauma that these societies experienced when housing was nationalized under the communist regime and then restituted in the early 1990s. But in French practice this law has proven quite useful and had an impact toward stricter abidance by the prescriptions of the public authorities, but also a preventive and safeguarding effect for people who might be put at risk by un-conscientious owners neglecting their property. Such a law and mechanism for action might be very useful in cases when, in buildings with collective ownership, one of the owners creates a problem and hampers the security of the other inhabitants.

According to the legal documents in force in France, the police have the right to intervene in the process of identification and works for SSH, when there is an official order to carry out refurbishing or to demolish a building. The decisions of the public authorities are carried out under the control of a specialized team with the cooperation of the police. The police are at the direct orders of the Mayor and the Prefect, who have issued the order. The basic function of the police is to impose and oversee the maintenance of public order, and SSH in France is classified as a violation of that order.

In France the public authorities that have the right to directly intervene and oblige the owners to maintain their property and put it in a proper condition, are at two levels, the Mayor (municipality level) and the Prefect (department level). They are the persons who can issue a decree-order for pulling down, renovating, or expropriating a property that is not in a proper condition for use or is a menace to public security and order. It is notable that all kinds of housing buildings, regardless of their size, of whether they are individual or collective, public or private, inhabited or not by their owners, are subject to the same kind of evaluations, sanctions, order, control, and penalties¹⁵.

The decisions of the Mayor and Prefect are made through a complicated mechanism of discussions and approvals, which are a result of the established relations with various competent institutions, experts and councils of the territorial authorities. In connection with SSH, orders can be classified as "urgent" (with a term of 24 hours for diagnosis by an expert) or "ordinary". Once issued they can be hardly contested (rare exceptions are allowed), they have a stated term for implementation and the work for fulfilling them is controlled following an established order. The Mayor and Prefect have a wide capacity for exercising their functions.

Financial provisions

The ambitious National Action Plan in France cannot be realised without relevant financing. The refurbishment of SSH and the support of tenants is very costly everywhere in Europe, and there is a considerable demand for involving different contributors to the action. The results can be achieved only with great efforts, strong willingness, good coordination, dynamic contacts, and clear specifications of the works and activity to be provided, and the respective costs.

The National Action Plan against SSH in France is funded from several sources. The biggest provider of funding is the State through the Ministries and certain national agencies as ANAH and

¹⁵ In a general way social housing also is included, but those buildings have special rules for their maintenance and the management.

specialised services. The ministries taking part are: *le Ministère du Logement et de la Ville* (The Ministry of Housing and City) through the '*Direction générale de l'urbanisme, de l'habitat et de la construction*' (DGUHC), in collaboration with other ministries: de la Santé, de l'Équipement, etc. The ministries are assisted by various other institutions and agencies: *Direction générale de la santé, Direction départementale de l'équipement, Direction départementale des affaires sanitaires et sociales* etc.

The most important and powerful housing agency in France is ANAH – *Agence nationale de l'habitat*, created in 1971 to support private small-size landlord/landladies in the maintenance of their housing. The aim of ANAH used to be the general improvement of the uncomfortable dwelling stock (around 2/3rd of the dwellings lacked at least one basic equipment) through an economic redistribution action. ANAH is fully funded by the State, it is responsible for the repairs and refurbishment of approximately 150 000 private housing units per year. After serious evaluation of planned projects, the contributions are allotted by ANAH to private landlord/landladies, providing their buildings have not been funded by the same Agency in the preceding 15 years.

Apart from state sources of financing, direct or indirect, there are also local and private sources. For funding purposes the Housing Solidarity Fund plays a particularly important role. All housing owners have the right to assistance from state agencies and services, but there are specialized institutions connected with the funding of various types of housing buildings: for social housing, or private housing. Institutions are also specialized according to the kind of renovation being made, since loans are given for specific purposes (for instance the fund for eliminating toxic lead paints, for eliminating asbestos isolation materials from buildings, etc.) There are separate funds, gathered in connection with the fight against social exclusion, for buildings at risk, for families at risk, for the homeless, etc. The budgets of the separate units in the overall policy for fighting SSH are distributed and specialized for funding various activities that are elements of a single operation: for technical diagnosis of the site, for control during the renovation, for hiring experts from private or public bureaus for specialized operations, for moving and temporary accommodation of tenants in another dwelling, etc.

In the French system of fighting against SSH and the funding of this activity, it is possible to accumulate means from various sources and thus carry out the operation. Effective solutions are found for the way in which renovation or cleaning operations will be paid, but the work for finding and coordinating these financial sources requires intense mobilization, qualification and, most important of all, a strong willingness to bring things to a successful end. A specific point is the funding of building and logistics activities in a given renovation operation of SSH. If the cause for the SSH condition lies with the owner, which is the prevalent case, the latter is obliged within a specified term to carry out the order and the prescriptions of the authorities. In case the owner fails to carry out the order or delays carrying it out, or deviates from it, the Mayor or Prefect hires a firm that will carry out the order at the expense of the owner. These penalties are carried out, and in exchange for the sum owed the owner may lose the property through expropriation if the sum is not paid out in full. Temporary local funds are used in advance for these penalty operations. Thus, it is always in the owner's interest to carry out the order within the required term. It has been registered that after these strict rules and measure were introduced, the cases of non-fulfilment of orders has sharply decreased in number.

Institutional arrangements

The operational unit that organizes and coordinates the action of the separate institutions at national level for the implementation of these ambitious plans and programs is "*Le Pôle national de lutte contre l'habitat indigne*" (PNLHI), ("National inter-ministerial centre for the struggle against substandard housing"). This is an operational, not an administrative organ. PNLHI is a combination of representatives from the ministries entrusted with responsibility regarding housing, health, social policy, migration and immigration, of representatives of the Ministry of the Interior and the large national agencies such as: Agency for Housing, Agency for Urban Planning Renovation, Agency for Housing Information. Associated with PNLHI are some other institutions providing housing assistance to persons and households, for instance the National Fund for Family Assistance, the Central Mutual Aid Fund for Farmers. The mission of PNLHI is to implement constant actions supporting the fight against SSH, such as legal and technical programs, training of staff and various operation actors included in the programs, to work with various organs for their inclusion in general action, to develop specialized networks of services at various territorial levels, to distribute useful information, organize exchange of experience and other initiatives facilitating and improving the struggle. A special internet address has been opened and is regularly updated. The goals of the inter-ministerial mission of PNLHI are specified preliminary in writing.

The first and most important step when opening the procedure for a housing site in the National Plan is to identify alleged SSH dwellings. This can be done by several methods, the most important of which is to direct the experts and services dealing with housing and SSH to the urban neighborhoods inhabited by poor households, and containing old and degraded buildings, to the places with a predominant population of immigrants, to the suburban and rural districts. The pinpointing of these places is often done by crossing statistical data from tax declarations on real estate and income tax declarations. Usually the "poor" property coincides with the "poor" households. Another method is to seek complaints by tenants or neighbours of the existing threat or insecurity in living in a concrete environment.

A second step is to organize an inspection of the housing and its environment. The inspection is carried out following a specific procedure, and during it the housing and environment are evaluated according to a set of documents; on the basis of this evaluation it is decided whether the housing is liable to mandatory refurbishment because it creates insecurity and risks for the inhabitants. In case negative characteristics are registered, concrete prescriptions are made concerning mandatory activities that the owner must undertake to put his/her property in the proper condition. There are cases when the evaluation is that the building is to be pulled down; this is when the costs of renovation are calculated to be greater than those for demolishing the old building and re-building a new one in its place.

The directions are usually given when the building and dwelling are currently inhabited. In cases when the inhabitants are tenants, the prescript is addressed to the owner, while the tenant benefits of protection, meaning he/she cannot be turned out of the house; the landlord/landlady who uses concealed or overt methods for coercion and expelling the tenant is subject to prosecution (the penalty for this could be prison and fine of 50 000 to 100 000 euros). Once the landlord/landlady has received the order to carry out renovation of the building, the tenants, if the nature of the building activity permits this, can continue to inhabit the building, and for this period till the end of the refurbishment and the repeal of the order of the Mayor or Prefect, the tenant does not owe rent. After the order is repealed, the rights of the tenant are restored to what they

were when the contract was first concluded. After the renovation the landlord/landlady does not have the right to raise the rent. In case the renovation requires vacating the premises, the landlord/landlady must himself propose a temporary housing to the tenant, corresponding to the previous one and the requirements of the household, and he/she is obliged during this period to pay the rent of the tenants and to assume the moving costs of the household. The rules are similar when the building must be demolished: in that case likewise the landlord/landlady is obliged to propose (up to 3 offers) another dwelling to the tenant, suitable for the tenant and his/her household, and assume the costs for moving and the rent during the term of the initial contract with the tenant. In some cases, when these costs are not supposed to be covered, the landlord/landlady is obliged to pay the rent at the new lodgings for a period of 3 months or a year. In cases when there is an order and prescript for renovation of the dwelling/building, but the owner does not carry it out within the prescribed term or at all, then the Mayor or Prefect has the right to intervene and order the implementation of the prescript in the name of the municipality or the department, but at the expense of the owner. The organs of the police are at the service of the Mayor or Prefect in such cases.

There are two kinds of police in France: one, called "*neighborhood police*", is responsible for maintaining public order; the other kind is responsible for the healthy living conditions of the population. The neighborhood police usually looks after public order and deals with minor infractions, including those related to the bad condition of buildings, dwellings, their use, and the unhealthy living conditions of tenants in small scale. But when considerable irregularities are registered in the living conditions, circumstances that put at risk public order on a larger scale, then the Mayor and Prefect have the right to take very strict measures to counter the negative situation through the specialized administrative police. For this purpose they mainly base their actions on legal texts from the laws of 2000 (SRU) and those of 2005 (cf. the list of laws and legislative decisions given in the annex).

According to how the danger of the housing is qualified, the orders for renovation or demolition are of two kinds: urgent or ordinary. In the urgent cases the Mayor orders that the owner be warned, then turns to the court of law and appoints an expert who, within 24 hours, must inspect and evaluate the condition of the case. On the basis of the assessment the Mayor reacts immediately and gives an order according to the degree of risk. The Mayor has full rights to order that the building be evacuated, to order quick measures for renovation or demolition in case the owner does not respond to the directions in the set term. Usually the orders include a clause stipulating that the premises of the building may not be rented during the time of the renovation (in case they are empty) or must be vacated at the expense of the owner, applying all procedures stipulated in the respective laws and legal provisions.

When SSH has been identified, the legal documents regulate relations between tenants and landlord/landladies; the rules provide for strong protection of tenants and control or penal measures for landlord/landladies. The presumption is that the landlord/landlady must not rent housing in an inadequate condition for living and must not fail to maintain his property in good condition. That is why the legal documents have a single purpose: to ensure a normal, human living environment for the inhabitants, and to deal relentlessly with landlord/landladies who do not take care of their property. Even private housing property is looked upon as a social value, as an element of the environment of all people; the overall picture of social progress depends among other things on the condition of this element.

It is most difficult to make the decision to identify SSH and respectively to prescribe action measures in cases when the owners inhabit the dwelling. Usually these owneroccupiers are poor households; in rural areas these are often lonely elderly people, for whom maintaining their property in a good state is a task exceeding their forces. The decision is a hard one in cases of condominiums inhabited by owners. They usually comprise households that cannot afford to pay the cost of upkeep and renovation of the building. In most cases the public authorities carry out the necessary procedures: the Mayor or Prefect assume the functions of owner and take part in the common activities of the collective. But French experts and specialized institutions admit there is still not a great store of experience in operations regarding condominiums in cases where houses are inhabited by owners, both in the city and in villages: activity is not great in this area.

Distribution of responsibilities and methods of work

The French National Action Plan combines targeting a precise problem with solutions bringing together diversified tools and actions carried out complementarily by the various actors involved. This *modus operandi* has made it possible to increase the impact of the public action significantly.

There is a variety of distribution of responsibilities; as mentioned, the distribution passes through several levels and is done among different services and specialists. The first level is territorial and involves the Prefect, who is free to select the most appropriate organization for acting in the fight against SSH. In some departments local PNLHI services are organized, even though at present there is no formal obligation to set up such services. The nature of the work is such that there are no restrictions in the organization of partnership, so it may include a large number of participants, including the court of justice, the prosecution, the police, financial institutions, private and public intermediaries, non-governmental organizations, etc. Organizing partnership at the local level is the most important part of applying action programs. In them are also included social workers at the department level and officials from the social insurance service.

The methods of work are chosen according to the many specific aspects of the fight against SSH, according to the features of each concrete project to be implemented. They pass through several phases:

- Preliminary identification of the zones with alleged SSH housing and the inhabitants of such housing.
- Coordination of the respective services under the leadership of the Prefect; preparing an action program and including in it various methods for intervention according to the specifics of the concrete case.
- Including the project in the action plan of the department for assisting households with difficulties in their housing conditions (PDALPD) in the local housing programs.
- Identifying the shortcomings of the dwelling and making a prescript for eliminating these defects by grouping operations for refurbishing the dwelling and other structuring operations (e. g. territorial renewal combined with housing renovation).
- Preparing contracts for work between State and municipalities or their group associations in cases where SSH is especially serious.
- Establishing partnership with various participants responsible for housing, for health, for social actions and social inclusion, as well as with the court and the police dealing with housing in bad condition and fighting people that exploit the poor, the so-called "*Marchands de sommeil/sleep merchants*".

According to the law of 2004, concerning the delegating of rights to fund housing by the State to departments and to groups of municipalities, and the law of 2006, which specifies that SSH is a problem that departments and municipalities are obliged to deal with, the territorial communities are permitted to organize joint activity as they wish in the framework of housing programs in three directions.

- Preparing program documents at the local level, which are implemented by associations of municipalities. The first part of the programs concerns the diagnosis of the housing market and its functioning; how program objectives will be defined depends on this diagnosis and the cases of SSH will be identified accordingly. On the basis of this assessment, the goals and action priorities, and means of starting procedures are specified.
- Granting rights for competent assessment of the financial part of the housing program: the association of municipalities involved in renovating and rehabilitating public and private housing property. Granting funding rights works in two directions: rights may be given to associations of municipalities and to departments.
- Funding the department in order to fulfil the plan for housing assistance to disadvantaged persons. This type of plan was established by law in 1990 and aims to support households in difficult circumstances so they can remain in and retain their housing by using funding from the special Fund for Housing Solidarity (currently managed by the department); it has a minimal duration of 3 years. The special service in the department must identify the priorities of households and the funding measures. This plan was devised and put in force by the State and through the department; it associates municipalities and their groupings as well as numerous social actors. The law of 2006 envisages complementing these plans with a special section on SSH (identifying the dwelling and action plan), as well as inspecting the addresses of these dwellings, which have been found by the various actors on the territory.

Part C Substandard housing policy in action: The results

Evaluation of the experience in the fight against substandard housing in France Implementation of the political and operative decisions

The general evaluation of the French fight against SSH is very positive, and the work done in France is eliciting great appreciation and respect for several reasons. First, though the issue is very complex and difficult to tackle, the French State has mustered the political courage to take up a state decision to find a radical solution to this tough problem. Second, because the results so far are to be followed up. France is giving an excellent example of political willingness to set up a national action programme on a difficult and major social issue. The French experience shows how ambitious political decisions can find the suitable, right institutions and operational actors to implement them, a flexible and convenient legal provision, the necessary set of funding sources, and the key lever for success, i.e. the right co-ordinating institution. It is worthwhile to go into some of these successful points, to specify the positive accents, and to offer some reflections on how to make the established system, mechanisms, and network even more performing in the future activities against SSH. It will also be useful to share the experience of different countries in fighting SSH.

It is important to begin by discussing the role of the State in the housing issue: France is a country where the housing issue is managed by the State. This is a very important particularity for the development of housing policy and the housing stock in the country, given that a dwelling is one of the most expensive products for any society, and the provision of housing can hardly be ensured effectively if the problems arising in connection with it have to be solved only by local government, by municipalities. Not only financial activities and services must be provided, but political ones, governance, information and research. A municipality can hardly organize and keep up an information observatory on housing or maintain a team of experts and researchers. Of course local government also has a role to play and the State's housing policy can hardly be fulfilled without it. But an exchange of leadership roles between local and central government will hardly give good results for housing policy. Is this true for all Member State countries, and can a broader view on this topic be taken?

It would be interesting to examine the division of responsibilities between central and local government regarding housing policy and care for the housing of the poor and the homeless in other countries. In some countries we notice the presence of dynamics and an exchange of the State-LG roles at various times in the development – but when and why exactly does this occur? A trend can be observed in the poorer countries or countries going through periods of economic difficulty to transfer responsibility from the central to local government. This happened in Portugal. In most countries of Central and Eastern Europe this is actually happening, although in their case there is often an ulterior motive for the local government to assume responsibility for housing: it thus gains greater control over the redistribution and privatization of plots of land and assets: when power lies with the municipality, then access to public property and opportunities for obtaining personal or collective favours are much greater.

In France the participation of politicians is decisive for the success of the National Plan to combat SSH: municipal council members, members of parliament and politicians at various levels of government are involved. The political initiative of the French government to fight SSH involves a serious concern how to keep the poor population in its place of residence and avoid removal, intensifying segregation in residential sections of urban areas. This is done in practice by ensuring that rents are not increased after the renewal of housing so the inhabitant will be able to afford to stay in place. This measure has one more advantage: it provides social cohesion, the possibility for different social groups of the population, people with different status, to mix. Can we compare this practice with examples from other countries that will enrich the experience in this sphere?

One success in the French fight against SSH has been the developing of adequate legal documents and their implementation. There are about ten specialized laws and orders. The Law on expropriation, the like of which few countries have, proved successful. By this law, serious penalties and fines are imposed on landlord/landladies who do not follow the orders of the executive power. This French experience is worth discussing at a wider forum but the present initiative provides a good opportunity for an assessment of the matter. The legal documents show that the beginning of the fight in France was not in 2001, that the policy for solving housing problems, including the fight against social exclusion and the protection of the poor and small scale housing owners, has been going on for years, long before the activities of the National Plan for Fighting SSH began.

This is also true with regard to the funding of the program – even before 2001 France had financial instruments for fighting against homelessness and giving assistance for the housing

problems of the poor inhabitants, for building and maintaining a considerable fund of social housing that is public property (17 %, or 4,5 million inhabitants). After 2001 it was only necessary to supplement and strengthen the already existing legislation in connection with the new tasks of the National Program.

A key role in the successful French fight against SSH was played by the coordinating centre PNLHI, created in 2001, and by the institutions, services, expert units that were created and included in a successfully operating system through PNLHI; among them are the National Agency for Housing and the Program for operations for improving housing conditions for poor households, which has been functioning since 1977.

Case studies: actions and lessons

A great success in the French national program against SSH was the establishment of local correspondents of PNLHI throughout the country; these people work for the program in 75 of all 96 departments in the country (2005). Other important steps were the opening of an observatory for gathering data on the housing stock and SSH in 30 of the departments (2005), the systematization and combination of the work of these observatories with other units for fighting poverty and assisting poor housing inhabitants, the preparation of special documents for this purpose, including the opening of an Internet address for access to data and information on the current operations for refurbishment, the creation of working structures for projects on SSH topics (55 structures in 2005), organized between the services and the corresponding institutions in the departments and the partners at the local level. The Network of Housing Observatories is collecting statistical information and planning future case studies, suggesting realistic funding, mapping the territory for SSH, and devising a methodology for locating SSH areas. Using a specific standardized profile of the housing, 82% of the cases have been evaluated as comfortable and 18 % as uncomfortable. In 2005, 92 of the departments opened special sections for work on SSH, attached to the housing services for assistance to citizens with housing problems.

Among the successes of the French measures against SSH, we should point out the methodology for discovering, selecting, and diagnosing buildings; especially efficient is the MOUS unit, which assists throughout the course of each operation and consults, free of charge, tenants and landlord/landladies. Very often the inhabitants have no knowledge of their rights and duties, of their possibilities for improving their dwellings, buildings. Often the tenants are not only poor but unaware and incapable of finding their way in the administration and other institutions. A particular feature of this methodology is that it provides an overview of the housing stock in whole urban regions and a preliminary study before actually visiting the address. This permits great precision in the information, followed by appropriate planning and funding of the operations.

In the framework of housing operations, the condition and protection of tenants are priorities. Special attention is given to women, children and single parent families. According to the National Program against SSH and the fight against homelessness (category III in the FEANTSA typology of homeless people), the public authorities can oblige owners to carry out work essential to ensuring the safety and otherwise fit state of dwellings. The individuals' right to temporary or permanent re-housing is guaranteed.

Various results have been achieved in the framework of the National Program against SSH, some of which have a quantitative expression, for instance the number of completed operations for eliminating defects in SSH:

- 2005 – 25 completed operations, corresponding to 850 renovated dwellings and 2 investigation projects;
- 2006 – 17 operations in course, corresponding to 520 dwellings to be renovated and 4 investigation projects;
- 2007 – 6 envisaged operations for renovation and 1 investigation project.

In 2006 the National Agency for Housing has given assistance for 19 300 rented dwelling. In these cases the dwellings were found to be in a bad condition with a strong need of renovation. The average expenditure for the refurbishment per dwelling came up to approximately 15 000 euros.

The Agency for Technical Management of Construction MOUS:

- in 2005 has worked with 13 teams on 450 housing projects;
- in 2006 has worked with 9 teams on 280 housing projects;
- in 2007 (by June) has worked with 12 teams on 255 housing projects.

Not all of the goals have been achieved in the National Program against SSH. Some shortcomings can be pointed out. For instance the analysis of results shows that it has been practically hard to achieve development and intensification of the connections between the separate services and units¹⁶, more suitable additional training of some services and staff agents is necessary. The French experts, however, have introduced the practice of continuously evaluating the achievements and the failures to achieve; as a result of this they manage to catch and correct some undesirable deviations in the course of work in the program. The following problems have been identified and set to be solved; these are problems on which the greater effectiveness of the program depends:

- Registered is an insufficiently active, efficient and quick response in some housing services of the departments in France: in them SSH has still not been identified and registered;
- Some leaders and municipal deputies in local government are not acquainted with the basic tools for fighting SSH, and this has led to inertia and lack of active participation in the reconstruction of the housing stock. Irregularities occur in some cases in the relations between tenants and landlord/landladies.
- PNLHI services have not been created in all French departments - they should be mandatory everywhere;
- The total number of identified SSH throughout the country is not known; it is known only for Paris;
- Difficulties occurred in cases when the owners were living in the SSH: large funds are needed for inclusion in the program, and the owners may not have them currently. Moving such inhabitants to other dwellings is difficult; most of them represent poor households that cannot take part physically in the renovation or assume a fitting share of the costs of renovation;
- There is a lag in the capacity for renovation and active measures in cases of SSH in condominiums with private owneroccupiers;

¹⁶ PNLHI, 2007, *Quelques résultats et chiffres*, Paris.

- Financial difficulties occur also in the renovation of rural buildings: many of them are in a very bad state and many of the owners are poor and elderly persons, homeowners.
- In terms of coordination, good cohesion is lacking between the public authorities and the courts of law. Very few penalizing verdicts are given against speculators owning SSH or “merchants of sleep”; the judiciary is not geared to the commitment of the units in the program.
- Better partnership is needed in the complex system of relations between the numerous partners. It is proving hard to mobilise all groups of actors; the biggest difficulty is with the courts, which are often absent and therefore delay their decisions, and refrain from giving penalizing verdicts, which would have an important restraining impact and could help prevent many cases of SSH even without the intervention of program mechanisms.
- The policy against SSH is conducted unevenly: some departments are quite active and carry out regular reconstruction operations for SSH (20 departments carried out nearly 50 % of all operations in the national program in 2005) while in other departments, about 1/3 of them, not a single initiative has been registered; this shows a lack of engagement with the program on the part of the public authorities.
- The national program against SSH is a very ambitious political commitment and needs additional specification. How can “dignity” be assessed with reference to the cultural affiliation of the inhabitants: should a minimal standard be set for a dwelling, to be referred to when renovating housing? Should there be some mandatory elements and recommended, suggested elements in that standard, to be fulfilled according to the concrete circumstances, or should every case have a completely separate project for its solution? Or perhaps the political conception should be concretized only with regard to some physical qualities of the housing environment?
- The notion of SSH should be specified better, or the second aspect of the notion, the one connected with dignity, should be elaborated on. Which housing characteristics correspond to “support” and “stimulation” of the dignity of tenants?

Some conclusions and recommendations

The first conclusion from this presentation of the National Action Plan to combat substandard housing is about the target group: the inhabitants of SSH are usually poor and vulnerable households, in most cases elderly people, lonely, or immigrants. A general social-psychological feature of this social group is their inertia, apathy, despair, ignorance, careless attitude, so they can hardly be expected to show spontaneity and active participation in the undertaken renovations. Without assistance and support from outside, from the respective services and institutions, they will hardly undertake actions for improving their housing conditions. In this sense the operations for rehabilitation and improving the housing environment for them is indeed a care and help for enhancing their status and their dignity.

According to French experts, as a result of the combined efforts of many institutions, specialists, and various other participants in the operations for reducing the number of SSH, many improvements have been achieved in the life of households after the operations. There is an especially big improvement in the self-esteem of women and children (the Aubervilliers case in Paris). Despite all this, much work has yet to be done for perfecting the multi-faceted mechanism for coordination between participants.

The harmonization between some of the work documents and their synchronization is part of the adaptation of each actor to the program, but a much more serious issue is the need to mobilize the local services and units in all departments. At present commitment is not even across the country.

The problem arising when small housing owners actually inhabit their dwellings can be resolved only through large financial resources: such are the conclusion and recommendations of French experts. Private housing that is in a very bad physical condition and being rented to poor tenants, is given priority at present. It has also been estimated that the participation of local government is decisive in conducting and controlling the renovation of dwellings and in work with the tenants and landlord/landladies. The successful relationships between operative actors and landowners or tenants depend to a great degree on the activeness of the municipality.

It is recommendable to establish a special system of periodical re-evaluation of the housing standards of the buildings and housing units in risk. Depreciation of the building fund is a continuous process, so measures can be taken in good time for maintaining the dwelling and the environment; the costs and losses in these cases will be considerably smaller if the buildings are not completely neglected. The mapping of the housing stock by neighbourhoods in the city and the periodical data entry on the condition of the buildings will also contribute greatly in moving on from resolving crisis situations to introducing a policy of prevention.

Part D The policy debate and questions

Questions for discussion, transferability and main areas of debate

The case of France and its strategy to combat the SSH provokes many questions. Discussing these questions among a wider range of experts from different European countries would be useful for improving the activity in each separate country through exchange of experience. Moreover, each country would be able to compare and evaluate itself as to what it has achieved, whether it is going in the right direction in respect to its mechanisms and practices, which could thereby be shared and improved.

One of the basic problems that arise concerns the field of intervention. An exact specification of the target to be impacted upon determines to a great degree the way of action and the eventual successful conclusion; hence some essential questions are: What is SSH and what should be the standard for defining a dwelling and environment as SSH? Do minimum housing standards exist in the different countries and what is the experience of countries in this respect? Should owneroccupier be included in SSH? Should the same requirements be set for collective housing buildings, for condominiums? How should SSH housing belonging to owners in condominiums be dealt with?

Another essential issue is connected with the political decision about the responsibilities for the housing environment and the state of the housing stock: which administrative structure is responsible for this task? If it is the State, how is the State's link maintained on SSH-related work with the other territorial levels of the country? What are the operative connections: the vertical and horizontal relations between the separate links and institutions? What are the respective

advantages and shortcomings when the responsibility for the condition of housing is borne by the central government or else by the local?

It is very important that there be a political recognition of the existence of SSH in a country, housing inhabited by citizens. Is there adequate concern about the situation of these citizens and is there evident willingness to help them? In itself this act of recognition is a sure sign of action; it is more than merely a verbal declaration of awareness of social inequality and of the desire to fight against social exclusion of groups of the population. Are there political awareness and practical decisions to fight against SSH in the European countries?

When the political decision to combat SSH has been put on the agenda, the serious question arises about the institutional network that can implement this decision. French experience shows that the most important thing is to create a coordinating centre, which will mobilize and organize the existing institutional units or, if necessary, will offer suggestions and recommendations to the executive government about the creation of new units and services that will become the elements for the fulfilment of the political task. What is the experience of different countries in this aspect?

Together with the building of an administrative structure, it is necessary to create a sufficient and updated legal framework for managing the complicated processes connected with property and managing property. Where such legal frameworks already exist, what are their shortcomings? Is the expropriation of housing property an established practice for cases when the property is being neglected and brought to a condition that presents a risk to the inhabitants and the environment? How do the authorities proceed in such cases and what are the possible decisions for dealing with negligent owners in case expropriation is not practiced?

Another question arises: when must the institutions responsible for evaluating the condition of the dwelling and environment intervene, and should SSH be rented at all? How is this matter resolved in different countries? Is the question being considered and discussed of granting a preliminary permission for renting (*rent permit*)? When SSH is already being rented, how must such cases be dealt with? All things indicate that the various cases that life offers cannot be encompassed by one or two models for operative solution. What could be other solutions?

It is exceptionally important to establish sufficiently precise and comprehensive information about the housing stock and the possibilities for keeping track of its condition as:

- Housing unit
- Housing building
- Outdoor environment of the housing building
- Neighbourhood area

Special attention should be devoted to identifying SSH conditions. In this connection the question arises of how to determine the housing standard for classifying homes as SSH. What should this standard be, what are the most important components to be included in order to connect the standard with the existing definition of SSH?

The creation of territorial observatories for information on the housing environment is exceptionally important and can be recorded as a big success of the French program. The most valuable data is about proportion of public and private housing sector, proportion of rented, vacant and owneroccupied sectors. This information is necessary in order to assess the financial burden that society must assume, in order to seek the collaboration of other units, including that

of the non-governmental sector. Is there such reliable information in the different European countries and how are data gathered regarding the condition of housing and the identification of SSH?

Classifying a dwelling as standard or substandard is based on a diagnosis, the making of which requires an elaborated system of indicators and their values. What is the practice in different countries, how are such data gathered or drawn? Are the dwellings visited in the course of diagnosing? Are model documents used in filling in these data and what are the data focused on in making an assessment? Besides the technical characteristics of a dwelling, are other general characteristics of the household considered for the assessment?

The key question: How to build up a preventive and sustainable policy against substandard housing in Europe? What partnership of transferabilities, good practices and system of knowledge between countries to establish?

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(Tous les documents cités sont disponibles sur le site Internet : (in bibliographie)

<http://www2.logement.gouv.fr/actu/habitatindigne/default.htm>

Les synthèses et documents relatifs à l'avancement du plan d'action

- La politique de lutte contre l'habitat indigne : bilan 2004 et bilan 2005 avec cartes
- Espaces/ DGUHC N°20 - Février 2004
- La politique de lutte contre l'habitat indigne ; une enquête de terrain, lettre des études / DGUHC n° 34

Etudes et rapports

- Etude sur la connaissance de l'habitat précaire; rédaction par le bureau d'études ACADIE pour le Pôle national de lutte contre l'habitat indigne en préparation à une journée nationale d'échange sur ce thème (24 octobre 2006)
- Expertise concernant les édifices menaçant ruine et immeubles et îlots insalubres, par Nancy Bouché, inspectrice générale de l'équipement - Conseil général des Ponts et Chaussées/ ministère de l'Equipement- 1998

Actes de colloques

- Les actes de la journée nationale d'échange du 12 septembre 2006 organisée par la DGUHC et le Pôle sur « les nouveaux outils de lutte contre l'habitat indigne » et dossier de cette journée avec documents de travail
- Les actes de la journée nationale d'échange du 30 novembre 2006 sur le thème de la question de l'intervention sociale dans les démarches de lutte contre l'habitat indigne
- Les actes de la journée nationale d'échange du 4 octobre 2005 sur les thèmes du droit des occupants et des aspects sociaux de la lutte contre l'habitat indigne
- Les actes du colloque international des 20 et 21 mai 2005 en Seine St Denis, sur le thème « habitat insalubre et santé »
- Les actes de la journée nationale d'échange du 30 mai 2005
- Les actes de la journée nationale d'échange du 16 mars 2005 sur le thème des " immeubles menaçant ruine"
- Les actes de la journée nationale d'échange du 26 octobre 2004
- Les actes de la journée nationale d'échange du 1 octobre 2004 sur le thème des "hôtels meublés
- Les actes de la journée d'échange du 11 février 2004 à Paris, sur les questions intéressant la région "Ile de France" :
- Les actes de la journée nationale d'échange du 11 mai 2004 axée sur "l'habitat indigne en milieu rural"
- Les actes de la journée nationale d'échange du 23 octobre 2003
- Les actes de la journée nationale d'échange du 2 juillet 2003

Autres publications

Institutionnelles

- Revue « Diagonal » n°172 : Dossier « indignité de l'insalubrité »
- Les Cahiers de l'ANAH¹⁹
- Spécial OPAH Renouvellement urbain, n° 117, juin 2006 notamment « Poitou-Charentes : un bail à réhabilitation pour vivre dans la dignité ».
- Spécial OPAH de Renouvellement urbain, n°118- sept 2006 et notamment l'article « Haut-Rhin : Mulhouse contre l'insalubrité, l'indécence et la vacance »
- « L'Habitat indigne » N° 116, mars 2006
- Les Cahiers de l'ANAH, Hors série, décembre 2005 : les 6e entretiens de l'Amélioration de l'habitat « L'ANAH et le Plan de cohésion sociale » table ronde 1: « Combattre l'insalubrité »

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Non institutionnelles

- *Fondation Abbé Pierre*²⁰
- Colloque Habitat indigne organisé par l'Espace Solidarité Habitat de la Fondation Abbé Pierre le 1 décembre 2005: Actes du colloque et rapport introductif de la FORS Recherche sociale.
- Espace Solidarité Habitat : Droit des occupants en habitat indigne / bilan 2006

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Code de la santé publique (extrait)
 Appendix 2 Code de la construction et de l'habitation: Relogement des occupants
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¹⁹ Voir site Internet : <http://www.anah.fr>

²⁰ Disponibles à la demande à la Fondation Abbé Pierre : <http://www.fondation-abbe-pierre.fr>

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List of Acronyms

- **ANAH**
Agence nationale de l'habitat
- **ANIL**
Agence nationale d'information pour le logement
- **ADIL**
Agence départementale d'information pour le logement
- **ANRU**
Agence nationale de rénovation urbaine
- **CAF**
Caisse d'allocations familiales (organisme de sécurité sociale)
- **CODERST**
Conseil départemental de l'environnement et des risques sanitaires et technologiques
- **DDASS**
Direction départementale des affaires sanitaires et sociales (ministère en charge de la Santé)
- **DDE**
Direction départementale de l'équipement (ministère en charge du logement)
- **DGUHC**
Direction générale de l'urbanisme, de l'habitat et de la construction (ministère en charge du logement)
- **DGS**
Direction générale de la santé (ministère en charge de la Santé)
- **DGAS**
Direction générale de l'action sociale (ministère en charge du logement et ministère en charge des affaires sociales)
- **Filocom**
Fichier fiscal des impôts locaux perçus sur la propriété bâtie et l'habitation, base de l'évaluation du PPPI (Cité dans l'article relatif au département de la Charente)
- **FSL**
Fond de solidarité logement (outil financier du PDALPD)
- **HLM**
Habitations à loyers modérés (logement locatif social public)

- **GIP**
Groupement d'intérêt public ; structure juridique d'association de partenaires publics pour réaliser un projet commun. Cité dans l'article relatif au département de la Charente.
- **MOUS**
maîtrise d'œuvre urbaine et sociale (opérateur technico-social)
- **OPAH**
Opération programmée d'amélioration de l'habitat
- **MSA**
Caisse de mutualité sociale agricole (organisme de sécurité sociale pour les professions liées à l'agriculture)
- **OMS / WHO**
Organisation Mondiale de la Santé/ World Health Organization
- **PACT ou PACT-ARIM**
opérateur professionnel, à caractère associatif, spécialisé dans le traitement de l'habitat privé
- **PIG**
Programme d'intérêt général
- **PNAI**
Programme national pour l'inclusion (programme communautaire encourageant la coopération entre États membres afin de lutter contre l'exclusion sociale) /Community programme encouraging cooperation between Member States to combat social exclusion/open coordination of social protection and inclusion policies/
- **PPPI**
Parc Privé Potentiellement Indigne (évaluation globale des logements insalubres, sur bases fiscales)
- **PDALPD**
Plan départemental d'action pour le logement des personnes défavorisées
- **PLH**
Programme local de l'habitat
- **RHI**
Opération publique de résorption de l'habitat insalubre irrémédiable
- **SCHS**
Service communal d'hygiène et de santé
- **SEM**
Société d'économie mixte (la SAIEM citée dans l'article relatif au département du Var est une SEM)
- **SSH**
Substandard housing