

Bridge Building Policy Review Report

**Social housing policies to support access to adequate
and affordable housing**

25-26 June 2025 (online)

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Vienna, November 2025



The BB Policy Review Report on "Social housing policies to support access to adequate and affordable housing" was developed within the European Centre's Bridge Building initiative to follow up on the successful implementation of the project BB Peer Reviews and Training—Mutual Learning Activities in BB countries (06/2021 – 03/2024).

The content, analysis, opinions, and recommendations in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the host country (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia) or the participating peer countries. The authors are grateful to Anette Scoppetta for her comments and Daria Jadric for proofreading and editing the report.



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List of Abbreviations

BB	Bridge Building
CEB	Council of Europe Development Bank
EU	European Union
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF+	European Social Fund plus
RRF	Recovery and Resilience Facility
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation

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1 Introduction

The Bridge Building (BB) Policy Review “Social housing policies to support access to adequate and affordable housing” was hosted by the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research (European Centre) in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia. It was the eighth in a series of mutual learning events offered to BB countries¹ by the European Centre.

Policy reviews provide expertise and promote the mutual exchange of experience and knowledge transfer about the situation on a selected topic in BB countries. They follow a well-established methodology used within the European Union in employment, social, and inclusion policies. The purpose of this policy review was to share practical information on social housing provision with a focus on BB countries; reflect on different strategies and measures to support access to social housing and their effectiveness in tackling housing needs; and identify opportunities for improvement and innovation.

Specifically, the policy review was aimed at answering the following questions:

- *What is the scale of social housing provision in the participating countries, and what are its key characteristics?*
- *Who is served by social housing, and what are the conditions of access?*
- *How is social housing integrated with other social services to support social housing tenants, including those with additional or specific needs?*
- *How have participating countries addressed the challenge of securing (long-term) funding to maintain and expand the social housing stock and to ensure that social housing remains affordable?*
- *What role do partnerships play at different governance levels and between public and private actors?*
- *What are promising housing solutions and practices to improve access to affordable and social housing?*

The policy review was attended by over 50 participants, including delegations from relevant ministries, public authorities, municipalities, and NGOs from eight BB countries: Armenia, Albania, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

¹ The BB countries are Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, the Republic of North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, and Ukraine. See <https://www.euro.centre.org/domains/bridging-building>

The two-day event featured a combination of presentations and discussions, including two dedicated working group sessions. The opening remarks were offered by Matthias Posch, Policy Officer at the Austrian Federal Ministry for Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, as well as Anette Scoppetta, the Deputy Director of the European Centre. After an introductory presentation by Eszter Zolyomi from the European Centre, presentations were provided by Tigran Jrbashyan, Expert for the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, Banush Shyqeriu from the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning, and Infrastructure of the Republic of Kosovo, Alice Pittini from Housing Europe, Bojan-Ilija Schnabl from the City of Vienna, Austria, Grzegorz Gajewski from the European Commission, and Samir Kulenovic from the Council of Europe Development Bank.

The two working group sessions focused on how social housing is implemented and funded in the BB countries, as well as their goals for further building out this sector. Specific topics included the integration of social housing with other social services, the targeting (or lack thereof) of at-risk groups in social housing projects, and the benefits and risks associated with various forms of public-private partnerships. The working group contributed to a fruitful, constructive discussion on common challenges and promising policy solutions.

A post-event survey of participants in the policy review yielded highly positive feedback. All respondents (100%) agreed that the event enhanced their knowledge, introduced useful approaches applicable to their professional work, and helped them develop new policy perspectives relevant to their roles. Additionally, 89% of respondents reported that the policy review helped them build a professional network and formulate policy recommendations for future reforms. Participants expressed particular interest in learning how different countries tackle the challenge of securing long-term funding to sustain and expand the social housing stock.

This report summarises the insights gained during the policy review and aims to share them with a broader audience. The report is structured as follows: Chapter 2 provides an overview of social housing in Europe, including the challenges it seeks to address, and different approaches to establishing and managing such systems. Chapter 3 focuses on the main social housing policy measures that BB countries have implemented or are planning to implement. Chapter 4 describes the various financing options and experiences regarding social housing projects. Chapter 5 presents the key takeaways from the event, and Chapter 6 concludes the report with final reflections.

2 Social Housing in the European Context

2.1 Challenges and Opportunities²

Social housing in Europe plays a crucial role in promoting social inclusion, reducing housing inequality, and ensuring access to adequate, affordable homes. Social housing refers to residential rental accommodation offered at below-market rates and allocated according to specific criteria, such as assessed need or placement on waiting lists (OECD, 2020). It may also be described as subsidised housing, public housing, or by other similar terms. While approaches vary widely across countries, common characteristics of social housing include some level of public or non-profit ownership, allocation based on need, and regulated rents. In Western and Northern Europe, social housing often accounts for a significant share of the total housing stock, notably in countries such as Austria, the Netherlands, and Denmark. In contrast, in Eastern European countries, including BB countries, social housing remains underdeveloped and fragmented, often shaped by post-socialist housing privatization and fiscal constraints.

Despite these differences, there is growing recognition across Europe of the need to expand and modernize social housing in response to rising affordability pressures. A recent Eurobarometer (2024) found that improving access to housing ranks among the top three policy priorities for young people across the EU. Similarly, housing affordability is a growing concern in many BB countries, where rapid urbanisation and internal migration have further strained housing markets, leading to affordability issues. According to a survey carried out in Western Balkan countries, one-third of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with current housing costs (Balkan Barometer, 2024). Vulnerable populations, such as displaced persons who often face additional barriers to affordable and adequate housing, are especially affected.

Governments across Europe are also increasingly challenged to align social housing strategies with broader policy objectives while also balancing competing priorities such as expanding the supply of affordable homes to meet growing demand, in ways that are both socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated policies that promote sustainable urban

² This section builds on the BB Policy Review Presentations “Social housing policies: A European perspective”, presented by Alice Pittini, Research Director at Housing Europe, and “Policy Review on Social housing policies to support access to adequate and affordable housing: Setting the scene” presented by Eszter Zolyomi, Researcher at the European Centre.

development, social inclusion, and investment in both new social housing and the renovation of existing stock.

Initiatives, such as [#Housing2030](#), developed by UN-Habitat, UNECE, and Housing Europe, provide policymakers with practical resources to address housing affordability and accessibility. It offers a comprehensive toolbox of good practices, grounded in the SDGs and the Geneva UN Charter for Sustainable Development, with strong emphasis on an integrated approach to housing policy spanning governance, finance, land use, and environmental sustainability. Such initiatives and good practices from across Europe can offer valuable guidance to BB countries in identifying weaknesses in their housing systems and selecting suitable policy reforms and effective tools to improve the availability and accessibility of social housing.

2.2 Lessons from Vienna³

Vienna's longstanding commitment to social housing demonstrates that treating housing as a fundamental right rather than a commodity can support both social well-being and economic growth. With approximately 900,000 of its 2 million residents living in public or subsidized housing, the city shows that public housing investment should not be viewed merely as a budget expense but also as a tool for economic development. Vienna's social housing system helps to attract and retain workers across income levels, creates jobs, and stabilizes neighbourhoods, contributing to the city's overall prosperity. This approach challenges the assumption that providing extensive and broadly accessible public housing is a drain on public resources. Vienna's experience rather suggests that a robust social housing sector can actually improve economic competitiveness.

Central to Vienna's success is its recognition that private markets alone cannot deliver affordable housing at the scale needed. The city's regulatory framework, particularly its limited-profit housing models, offers practical alternatives to purely market-driven development. For Vienna's limited-profit housing associations, profits are capped at 3.5% on equity, and reinvestments must be made in new construction or renovation. This system ensures that housing development serves public needs while remaining financially viable for developers. The model demonstrates how regulation can

³ This section builds on the BB Policy Review Presentation "The Vienna Model of Affordable Housing", presented by Bojan-Ilija Schnabl, Expert, Strategic Projects and International Affairs in the City of Vienna, Austria.

effectively guide private-sector participation without relying either solely on public funding or on commercial development.

The Vienna model also illustrates how housing policy can address multiple societal challenges simultaneously. The city uses affordable housing as a means of promoting social integration, supporting economic development, and advancing climate goals. Additionally, the relatively low rental prices charged by municipal units, along with their broad accessibility, ensure a viable alternative to the private market, encouraging affordability in the private market as well. Affordable housing is central to all the city's strategic plans, and the city's experience shows that sustained public commitment to housing, combined with diverse long-term financing and strong quality standards, can create a system where affordability and quality reinforce each other over time.

3 Social Housing Approaches Across BB Countries

The status and development of social housing schemes vary across the region, influenced by fiscal considerations, migration and displacement dynamics, and differing administrative and regulatory frameworks. Despite these variations, most countries face a pronounced gap between housing needs and available stock, with most programs underscoring the necessity to expand supply, improve targeting, and secure sustainable financing. Integration with other social services is evolving but remains limited in practice. Implementation of social housing projects generally rests with municipalities, though they tend to fall under national frameworks. Marginalized populations, especially persons with disabilities, large and single-parent families, and displaced persons, are typically the priority groups targeted. There is a growing need to strengthen the use of data for policy formulation and targeting, diversify social housing options in line with beneficiaries' needs and preferences, and better connect social housing initiatives with complementary social services.

3.1 Armenia's Social Housing Strategic Program⁴

To address housing vulnerability and ensure that no one in Armenia lives below the national housing standard, the government has launched a comprehensive Social Housing Strategic Program. This initiative leverages a wide range of policy instruments and analytical methods to assess housing needs, identify and prioritize the most vulnerable groups, and promote regional equity, social justice, and an overall improvement of quality of life. The program's overarching vision is to deliver "accessible, sustainable, and inclusive housing for all, ensuring that no one lives below the national housing standard while emphasizing regional parity, promoting social justice, and improving the quality of life for the entire population." This vision is operationalized through four strategic goals:

1. Enhance the living standards of the population by improving the quality and sustainability of their housing conditions within local communities.
2. Address the housing challenges by providing support for individuals in purchasing or constructing their own residential units in selected communities.
3. Secure sustainable long-term housing options for eligible vulnerable individuals, ensuring decentralization.
4. Ensure short-term shelters for individuals affected by emergencies, disasters, or force majeure, ensuring immediate support and safety. These goals are targeted at different population groups based on their residential status, income, housing quality, and whether any household members are elderly, have a disability, or have children. In total, 123,059 households—both in poor residential and non-residential accommodation—are targeted.

Implementation is structured through an action plan that matches each goal to specific measures and monitoring indicators. Specific measures include, among others, updating relevant legal frameworks, constructing new social housing units and renovating existing ones, and selecting operators to manage the social housing stock. Owners and tenants in need are offered housing repair and social and rental assistance, while those who wish to purchase or build new homes receive financial support. The program adopts a case management approach that integrates social services, steers beneficiaries towards suitable options, and provides support through

⁴ This section builds on the BB Policy Review Presentation, "Social Housing Strategic Program", presented by Tigran Jrbashyan, an Expert cooperating with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia.

the banking system to ensure targeted implementation and minimize transaction costs.

Especially noteworthy about the Social Housing Strategic Program is its systematic, data-driven targeting and intervention, using detailed profiling and vulnerability assessments to match program responses to beneficiaries' needs. The program builds on a two-pronged approach to assess housing vulnerability among the population. Initial profiling uses administrative and census data to evaluate real estate characteristics, household amenities, and infrastructure, such as water supply, waste management, and access to utilities. Data from Armenia's Integrated Living Conditions Survey is then used to construct an 'Integrated Composite Index', combining six groups of questions (income, vulnerability, housing conditions, living conditions, infrastructure, and quality of infrastructure), each assigned specific weights. This quantitative approach allows Armenia to segment the population into five clusters, thus targeting social housing interventions to those who need them most, and to differentiate interventions based on target groups. Based on this analysis, approximately 46,200 households, representing almost 6% of all households in Armenia, are identified as in urgent need of improvements in their housing and living conditions.

At the same time, Armenia analyzed 'economic, social, and other infrastructure' within communities, based on demographic, socio-economic, residential/industrial, infrastructure, education, healthcare, and other indicators. Clustering communities based on size, economic activity, infrastructure provisions, and available unused properties, four distinct community patterns emerged, each with distinct profiles of opportunity and constraint. In addition, an analysis of the residential housing stock was conducted at multiple levels. Of particular note is the analysis of unoccupied residential units across regions. While official data record some 29,000 unoccupied residential houses and 26,500 empty apartments, there are various discrepancies, for example, due to the forced displacement of many citizens from Nagorno Karabakh. In these cases, available units may be de facto occupied but not formally reported, highlighting the need for ongoing data updates and validation, as well as targeted measures to ensure these people have access to social housing.

Financially, the program is expected to cost approximately 1,239.8 billion AMD (2.8 billion euros), with public resources and development assistance combined. This supports rental subsidies and repairs for over 121,500 households, construction or purchase assistance for over 41,000 families, social housing capacity for 12,100 of the most vulnerable, and 1,200 emergency shelter beds nationwide. Public resources constitute the bulk of funding, with strategic contributions from international partners.

3.2 Kosovo's Social Housing Reform: Diversifying Housing Policies⁵

Despite post-war reconstruction and extensive private-sector activity in the housing construction market, significant challenges persist, particularly for vulnerable and low-income groups. According to the most recent census in 2024, Kosovo recorded 556,779 housing units, of which only 1,178 were classified as social housing. Compounding the issue, a substantial number of properties remain unregulated, with over 352,000 buildings reported to lack construction permits. To address chronic housing shortages and ensure access to adequate shelter for all citizens, Kosovo has adopted a broad set of policy measures targeting the provision and management of social and affordable housing. Specifically, through reforms to its legal framework, Kosovo has established two main housing initiatives: the Adequate Social Housing Program and the Social and Affordable Housing Project.

The Adequate Social Housing Program aims to establish a sustainable social and affordable housing system by increasing the number of adequate social housing units. Financial sustainability will be promoted through performance-based municipal grants, income-based rent subsidies for beneficiaries, and future public-private partnerships for mixed housing developments on public land. The project is based on three main pillars: construction of new social housing projects, renovation of existing social housing units, and reconstruction or renovation of private houses for vulnerable families. The project is funded jointly by the Council of Europe Development Bank (25 million euros) and Kosovo's Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure (12 million euros), with a contribution from the municipalities. The program aims to provide housing to approximately 2,000 families.

In addition, Kosovo recognizes affordable and social housing as a priority, especially impacting low-income families, youth, single mothers, and public sector workers. The Social and Affordable Housing Project aims to create 20% of new affordable housing units dedicated to social housing to support the most at-risk groups. This should promote social inclusion and reduce segregation. This project emphasizes both new construction and the renovation of existing homes to accommodate low-income and vulnerable households. With 4,000 units envisioned across 38 municipalities, ensuring fair distribution and social inclusion across all municipalities. Construction

⁵ This section builds on the BB Policy Review Presentation, "Reforming Policies for Diversifying Housing Policies in Kosovo: The program of Adequate Social Housing and Affordable Housing — the Quest for Affordable, Sustainable and Inclusive Housing", presented by Banush Shygeriu, Leader of the Project Management Unit, Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure, Department for Spatial Planning, Construction and Housing, Kosovo.

has already begun on 410 units across four municipalities, with completion expected within three years.

Additionally, within this overall strategy, Kosovo has established the Electronic Register for Social and Affordable Housing, a comprehensive online platform designed to improve the management of social and affordable housing. Intended to centralize and streamline the administration of these programs, this online platform consolidates beneficiary applications and housing unit data, increasing both efficiency and transparency, while also linking to other government systems.

3.3 BB Country Reflections

Albania: Social housing in Albania is largely a municipal responsibility, implemented in line with national programs. Beneficiaries are selected by local commissions, which include a mix of municipal representatives and NGOs, and they base their decisions on criteria such as income level, poor/dangerous housing quality, and homelessness. The main programs include social rental housing, improvement or reconstruction of existing housing, low-cost housing, temporary housing provision, and the 'specialized housing program'. The number of social housing recipients is limited by municipal capacity, which generally allows for only a small number of applicants to receive these benefits. There seems to be both a lack of funding and an administrative capacity shortfall to accommodate a significant number of social housing applicants.

Ukraine: In Ukraine, social housing remains in the early stages of development. Legislative work aims to establish a dedicated social housing fund, while the current policy focus is on providing temporary accommodation for internally displaced persons. Supported living services and housing rental subsidies are gradually being introduced, and the private sector is being actively involved to address the housing issues of internally displaced persons. Eligibility is determined by a lack of home ownership, inability to access mortgages, and vulnerable status (e.g., disability, low income, or internal displacement status). Ukraine is working to build capacity by promoting economic independence and addressing specific needs through targeted social services.

Moldova: In Moldova, social housing is coordinated by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development and administered by 'first-level local authorities'. Social housing is available to low-income households, with priority given to those with severe disabilities, young families without housing, large families, and children transitioning out of state care, and to public sector employees in underserved areas if there is still availability after the priority groups have been accounted for. Social services are separated from social housing, instead falling under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. There is, however, collaboration between

the two ministries for categories of social services that also include shelter provisions (e.g., temporary shelter for persons with disabilities).

Montenegro: Social housing in Montenegro is integrated within a broader system of social protection and is directed toward marginal groups, such as members of the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities, single parents, older persons, and those with disabilities. Beneficiaries of social assistance may benefit from zero or reduced rent.

4 Sustainable Funding Options for Social Housing in BB Countries

Overall, securing long-term funding for social housing remains a significant challenge in the region, particularly when it comes to the expansion of the housing stock. While social housing across the region is generally financed through a mix of central government funds and municipal contributions, international donor funding also plays a key role. Key challenges include aligning legislation, ensuring effective coordination among stakeholders, and securing sustained investment, particularly for dedicated social housing initiatives, which have attracted limited donor interest in some contexts.

On the second day of the policy review, presentations by representatives of the European Commission and the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) showcased social housing initiatives supported by these institutions. They addressed the challenges involved in developing and implementing such projects. Following these presentations, representatives from the BB countries shared insights into the funding landscape for social housing in their respective contexts.

4.1 Social and Affordable Housing Investments Supported by EU Funds⁶

Meeting social housing needs in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans requires adaptable funding approaches and coordinated efforts at both national and regional

⁶ This section builds on the BB Policy Review Presentation, “Social housing and beyond – Inspiring investment in social and affordable housing, and services with support of EU funds”, presented by Grzegorz Gajewski, Task Force on Housing, European Commission.

levels. The [European Commission's 2024–2029 Political Guidelines](#) recognize housing as a key priority, which has led to the creation of a dedicated Task Force on Housing. The Task Force supports collaboration among EU Member States and neighbouring regions by promoting the exchange of best practices, removing regulatory obstacles, and mobilizing a mix of financial resources to enhance social and affordable housing systems. As such, the EU's promotion of social housing policies offers a model for social housing interventions in the region.

While countries in the BB region are not eligible for many EU funding instruments (such as the ERDF, ESF+, and RRF), the principles behind these instruments remain highly relevant. For instance, the [European Commission's Operational Toolkit on the use of EU funds for investments in social housing and associated services](#) offers practical guidance, eligibility guidelines, and successful case studies that, while tailored to EU Member States, provide valuable insights. Key strategies, such as leveraging diverse financing sources, fostering coordination among municipalities, and involving housing agencies and civil society, can be effectively applied in the BB context. By combining public resources with support from external partners or international financial institutions, governments can better ensure a sustainable flow of investments and build stronger local capacities.

Key lessons emerging from the presented EU-supported projects underscore the importance of integrating housing infrastructure with supportive interventions, such as social services and employment programs. Embedding housing initiatives within broader economic and social development plans, as well as forging strong partnerships at both the local and regional levels, can help BB countries create stable, sustainably funded social housing programs.

4.2 Financing and Implementing Inclusive Housing⁷

There are several key challenges currently facing the housing sector in Europe, particularly in the BB region. Rapidly rising prices and weak supply have created “pressure zones” in many cities, where young families, recent graduates, and other working-class groups cannot afford adequate housing. At the same time, the difficulty in accommodating an increased number of refugees and forcibly displaced people, as well as the steep rise in homelessness, underscore the difficulty in ensuring quality housing for everyone. In addition, the BB countries, where social housing stocks are

⁷ This section builds on the BB Policy Review Presentation, “Financing and implementing Inclusive Housing”, presented by Samir Kulenovic, Senior Technical Advisor for Housing and Urban Development, Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB).

frequently below 2%, face the added difficulty of limited competition between the public and private housing markets.

To address these challenges, the CEB advocates a “holistic approach” to funding social housing projects. There should be site assessments and direct interactions with the people who ultimately benefit from housing projects. By applying a “vulnerability lens” to social housing projects, financing can directly favour those most at risk, including refugees and forcibly displaced persons. The approach benefits from close international cooperation and knowledge-sharing, reflecting wide-ranging partnerships not only with EU institutions and agencies but also with advocacy networks, academia, and civil society organizations. These collaborations aim to build the broader capacity needed to expand rental housing, which is in particularly short supply, and to maintain flexible financing programs that also support homeownership, especially in post-conflict reconstruction.

Several project examples demonstrate how such financing can be effectively implemented. In Spain, the CEB provided loans to the Institut Català de Finances, which in turn provided loans to NGOs and small municipalities to modernize and acquire social housing units. This enabled families to remain in their homes by converting delinquent mortgages to rentals, helping to prevent them from falling into homelessness. This project is illustrative of effective coordination between large international funding institutions, which may also provide guiding expertise, and smaller local organizations, which tend to have context-specific knowledge of the areas and communities they serve.

It is also crucial that, rather than funding projects like these alone, policy and regulation can serve as powerful tools for improving housing outcomes. For example, tax incentives can be used to encourage the use of vacant properties, discouraging speculation and bringing more housing onto the market. It is also crucial to ensure that housing subsidies are supported by sustainable public financing, rather than relying solely on short-term or one-off projects. Ultimately, governments must recognize housing not merely as a commodity, but as a fundamental social right and develop policies that reflect this commitment.

4.3 BB Country Reflections on Funding

Kosovo: In Kosovo, social housing is funded through a combination of central government resources (primarily from the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure), municipal budgets, and contributions from various donors. This funding supports the construction of new housing units, renovation of existing properties, and the rental of private units for eligible beneficiaries. The Adequate Social Housing Program is primarily financed through a loan from the Council of

Europe Development Bank (CEB), managed by the said Ministry and implemented at the municipal level through dedicated project implementation units. Kosovo's Affordable and Social Housing Program is funded by the central government. A persistent challenge has been ensuring alignment between legislation and coordination across ministries, municipalities, and funding institutions, such as the CEB.

Moldova: Although Moldova's social housing sector is still in its early stages, a new "third edition" social housing project is underway. This program is financed by the government, with support from the CEB, which is providing a 20 million euro loan for the construction of new social housing and the refurbishment of existing buildings, as well as an additional 1 million euros from its Green Social Investment fund for energy-efficiency upgrades. Municipalities are also expected to contribute in-kind resources.

Armenia: The Armenian government remains the principal funder of its housing programs, with donors such as the World Bank contributing towards projects targeted at displaced populations and vulnerable groups. Financing dedicated social housing has been more challenging, however, as fewer international donors have been interested. Service sustainability is a noted concern, underscoring the need for continued investment.

5 Key Messages

Key message 1: Recognize the importance of social housing for inclusive and sustainable development

Social housing is important beyond its role as a provider of shelter. It offers stability for vulnerable and low-income groups, supports social integration, and fosters long-term economic growth. Cities like Vienna demonstrate that viewing social housing as an investment rather than an expense can create lasting wealth and a higher quality of life for future generations.

Key message 2: Identify and assess housing needs with data-driven strategies to enhance targeting and efficiency

The cases shared by Armenia and Kosovo highlight the importance of using data to inform the design of social housing programs. Extensive data collection and analysis are necessary to identify housing needs (and how those needs may change over time) and direct resources and monitor implementation accordingly. Evidence-based policymaking helps ensure that social housing is developed efficiently and delivers meaningful benefits to beneficiaries.

Key message 3: Social housing policies should apply a holistic approach that integrates complementary social services

In several BB countries, the need to combine social housing with additional support services was strongly emphasized. Providing housing for vulnerable groups is a critical first step, but without connections to services such as healthcare, employment support, or addiction treatment, underlying vulnerabilities may persist. A more integrated approach can promote self-sufficiency among beneficiaries and significantly improve their overall well-being.

Key message 4: International funding and expertise are most effective when paired with local knowledge and implementation

International loans and grants (e.g., from institutions such as the CEB) can be essential for financing social housing projects, and these institutions also offer expert guidance based on their extensive experience in funding similar projects. At the same time, the importance of local expertise when implementing these projects cannot be understated. Municipal authorities and local NGOs bring essential insights into local housing markets and building possibilities, as well as potential linkages to local social services. They are also better positioned to engage with communities and respond to tenants' specific needs, ensuring that projects are both relevant and sustainable.

Key message 5: Social housing must be supported by coherent and enabling legislation

Beyond construction and funding, functional social housing requires a supportive legal framework. Legislation should align with and reinforce national housing goals, rather than create barriers. For example, governments may adapt tax policies to incentivize the use of vacant properties or to promote the inclusion of affordable rental units in new developments. Ultimately, housing laws and regulations should actively contribute to realizing each country's vision for inclusive and sustainable social housing.

6 Conclusions

The report offers insights into social housing in BB countries, based on the presentations and discussions held during the policy review on *"Social Housing Policies to Support Access to Adequate and Affordable Housing"*. The policy review enabled participants to exchange experiences on ongoing policy efforts in BB countries to address housing needs, identify key challenges and areas for improvement, and share promising solutions and practices that can improve access to social housing.

The discussions underscored common challenges among BB countries in addressing the substantial gap between demand for affordable homes and the limited supply of social housing, including aligning legal frameworks, ensuring effective coordination among stakeholders, and securing sustained investment to support the expansion and maintenance of social housing programs. Although marginalized populations, such as people with disabilities, large and single-parent families, and displaced persons, are generally the primary focus, participants emphasised the need for improved targeting as well as integration of social housing with other support services, which remains limited.

Despite differences in policy approaches and implementation experiences across BB countries, the policy review identified several shared themes. The cases of Armenia and Kosovo demonstrated the growing use of data to inform policy and guide resource allocation, as well as the need for flexible housing options tailored to recipient needs. Another common feature is the significant role of international donors in financing social housing across the region. The examples presented at the policy review and the following working group discussions highlighted both the opportunities and challenges involved in developing and implementing such donor-funded projects.

The policy review provided a valuable platform for knowledge exchange, policy reflection, and mutual learning about social housing policies among participating countries. Moving forward, social housing should be recognized as a long-term investment that supports stability, social inclusion, and economic resilience. Policymakers in the BB region are encouraged to adapt their legal frameworks to support the development and sustainability of social housing initiatives, to design social housing policies that are holistic, integrating relevant support services to address broader vulnerabilities, adopt data-driven approaches to identify housing needs and enhance the targeting and efficiency of social housing programs, and promote existing good practices.

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