

## Housing Workshop

Amsterdam, May 18<sup>th</sup> 2016

### Speakers:

- Andreas Poppenbøll, International House Copenhagen
- Ulla Palm Larsen, Municipality of Ballerup

### Introductory part

The meeting started with a brief introduction of Andreas Poppenbøll about housing issues in Copenhagen. Some data showed how paramount the topic is, as every year there is an average of 1000 new Copenhagers. To tackle the matter, the municipality of Copenhagen is employing a threefold strategy, based on information, network and cooperation.

Firstly, information about housing for new international inhabitants has to be provided in English (online as well as by flyers and no-virtual promotion means) and it should give clear instructions about finding and buying a home, investing in the real estate and about banking issues in relation with housing (mortgages, loan, insurances, etc...). Information events and housing fairs would be an efficient way to spread information about the mentioned issues.

Secondly, a good network of different organizations is a valid support in dealing with housing problems. The collaboration amongst HR departments, companies, consultants and housing agencies turns out to be a great help in the research of the best accommodation in different situations. The aim is to help migrants to resolve housing problems before moving, while they are still resident in their country of origin, in order to facilitate their transition.

Finally, the cooperation of all these institutions and housing agents is leading to the realization of 'The greater Copenhagen Accomodation project': a project of public housing whose goal is to make the region more attractive, not only for migrants.

After the introduction by Andreas Poppenbøll, Ulla Palm Larsen, from the Municipality of Ballerup, presented the housing situation in this town 15 km away from Copenhagen. Here the gap between job positions and inhabitants is striking: there are 48.000 job positions for highly skilled workers, but only around 7.000 people living in the city. The majority of the employees (of international origin) chose to live in Copenhagen or in other municipalities of the region. To reduce this gap, the municipality of Bellerup has to promote its attractive points, namely the access to international talents and companies, and the offering of public housing possibilities. The latter point has risen a discussion about how to achieve a balanced distribution of public and private housing. The access criteria for public housing follow certain priorities, depending on the living area and the needs of the inhabitants. One of the basic requirements, for example, to access public housing in Bellerup is an employment contract. Therefore, the companies represent the principal connection between the employees and the public housing (or the organizations that manage it): migrants are so invited to see and evaluate public accommodation, meet companies and cooperate with them.

### **Workshop**

Public housing is a very sensitive topic, above all for a Dutch audience. The issue has risen a discussion about the housing policies regarding migrants and how to deal with the risk of discrimination in the relationship between international migrants and resident people. Eventually, the confrontation between the Dutch and the Danish housing situation has brought to list a number of interventions to solve or improve housing for migrants (and not) at three different levels: local, national and European. In some cases, interventions might occur at both a local and a national level.

#### Local level:

- Cooperation between cities: an intercity (and thus national) network of information might be extremely useful for migrants, in order to be prepared for the moving experience before it happens.
- The municipality and the State should invest more on land, to achieve a balanced distribution of public and payable housing.
- The previous intervention would enhance the demand of combined private and public housing.
- The municipality should promote a combination of both working and living places, avoiding the gap between the two (as in the case of Bellerup).

- Creating links between stakeholders and companies would improve the quality of information regarding housing.
- Rules for registration preceding relocation should be clearly stated.

#### National level:

- The enhancement of transportations and infrastructure would simplify the distribution of living spaces and the growth of the offering from different cities.
- The improvement of transportations would benefit also the distribution of the companies in the national territory.
- As the national language is one of the requirements for a job development and a social integration, language courses and education should be offered to migrants at a national level.

#### European level:

- The major intervention of the European Union should consist in funding programs and permits for more public expenses for housing.
- More investment in house building programs would mean more job.
- The European Union should also provide clear information about the opportunities offered by different countries.