



# FILLING VACANCIES

---

**VACANT REAL ESTATE:** SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY TO FIND  
AFFORDABLE HOUSING SOLUTIONS IN EUROPE

---

# SUMMARY

Introduction .....	3
<b>INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO MAKE USE OF VACANT HOUSING IN THE LONG TERM .....</b>	<b>9</b>
England   Stoke-on-Trent   Homesteading & Empty Homes Strategy   <i>Slack residential market</i> .....	9
France  Paris   'Multiloc' initiative   <i>Tight market with high tourist flows</i> .....	11
Belgium   Brussels (Anderlecht)   Verheyden Project - Community Land Trust Bruxelles (CLTB)   <i>Tight residential market</i> .....	12
Italy   Rome & Lazio Region   'Auto-récupéro'   <i>Tight market with high tourist flows</i> .....	14
<b>TEMPORARY OCCUPANCY SOLUTIONS IN THE SHORT AND MEDIUM TERM .....</b>	<b>16</b>
Europe   Camelot Europe   <i>Diverse market</i> .....	16
Belgium   Brussels   Temporary occupancy agreements   <i>Tight market with high tourist flows</i> .....	17
Germany   Leipzig   'AusBauHaus'   <i>Tight residential market</i> .....	19
<b>ASSET MANAGEMENT AGENCIES AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE AFFORDABLE HOUSING .....</b>	<b>22</b>
Spain   Barcelona   'La Sareb es nuestra' [The Bad Bank is ours]   <i>Tight market with high tourist flows</i> .....	22
Ireland   NAMA   <i>Diverse market</i> .....	23
<b>AMBITIOUS COERCIVE SOLUTIONS: TAXES AND LEGISLATION .....</b>	<b>26</b>
France   Vacancy tax   <i>Diverse market</i> .....	26
Belgium   Charleroi   Réquisition douce [Gentle requisition] And Housing Officer   <i>Slack residential market</i> .....	28

# INTRODUCTION

This paper has been created to initiate a process of bringing together innovative solutions for affordable housing in Europe and to launch a Europe-wide think-in on the many initiatives and opportunities that already exist at local level on the subject. One in six properties are vacant in Europe<sup>1</sup>; vacant real estate therefore represents a significant and under-utilised windfall of housing that could be used to respond to the growing and alarming issues of housing exclusion in Europe. This paper should not be read as a comprehensive and exhaustive list of Europe's silver bullet solutions for reusing vacant real estate to provide affordable housing. Rather, it is a brief overview of the various – and sometimes controversial – initiatives that have used these vacant resources for short- and long-term housing of those who do not have the means to find housing at market prices.

Table 1 gives an overview of the scale of housing vacancy. **More than 38 million conventional dwellings were unoccupied** (i.e. vacant or used as seasonal or secondary residences) **in 2011 in Europe**. In eight European countries, more than one in four housing units is not a home. While the process of putting this housing stock to use is complex (often involving renovation work), and while it would be inconceivable to question the property rights of people who own a secondary residence, the scale of the problem and the alarming increase in the number of people experiencing housing exclusion calls for an appropriate political response.

---

<sup>1</sup> The average vacancy rate in Europe, which includes vacant housing and secondary residences, is about 18%. FEANTSA and the Foundation Abbé Pierre, *An Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe*, 2015.

Table 1 - Unoccupied conventional dwellings in EU countries

Country	Total no. of conventional dwellings	No. of unoccupied conventional dwellings	% of unoccupied conventional dwellings
Greece	6,371,901	2,249,813	35.3%
Croatia	2,246,910	750,352	33.4%
Portugal	5,859,540	1,868,428	31.9%
Malta	223,850	71,080	31.8%
Bulgaria	3,882,810	1,220,416	31.4%
Cyprus	431,059	133,937	31.1%
Spain	25,206,525	7,124,930	28.3%
Italy	31,208,161	7,072,984	22.7%
Latvia	1,018,532	210,721	20.7%
Slovenia	844,656	174,529	20.7%
Austria	4,441,408	796,450	17.9%
Ireland	1,994,968	345,856	17.3%
Sweden	4,824,227	822,222	17.0%
France	33,543,942	5,630,895	16.8%
Romania	8,722,398	1,427,410	16.4%
Lithuania	1,374,233	198,257	14.4%
Estonia	649,746	93,442	14.4%
Belgium	5,308,946	745,295	14.0%
Czech Rep.	4,756,572	651,937	13.7%
Denmark	2,873,365	364,515	12.7%
Hungary	4,390,302	477,873	10.9%
Slovakia	1,941,176	196,466	10.1%
Finland	2,807,505	270,308	9.6%
Germany	40,563,313	3,643,838	9.0%
Luxembourg	222,946	16,078	7.2%
Netherlands	7,459,694	520,207	7.0%
UK	27,469,425	1,081,060	3.9%
Poland	12,965,598	323,682	2.5%

Source: Eurostat Census Hub, Census 2011.

Conventional dwellings are defined as structurally separate and independent buildings in a permanent location, intended for permanent human habitation and which are occupied, vacant or reserved for seasonal/secondary use.

Occupied conventional dwellings are conventional dwellings that are the usual residence of one or several people at the time of the census. Vacant conventional dwellings are conventional dwellings that are not the usual residence of any person at the time of the census.

Dwellings are divided into categories according to the following definitions:

- A secondary residence is a dwelling that is only occupied for part of the year (less than 6 months per year), during weekends, holidays and free time. Occasional dwellings are classified as secondary residences. These dwellings are used occasionally for professional reasons by a person who also has a family home.

- A vacant dwelling is unoccupied and can be: available for sale or rent (new or old), already sold or rented and awaiting occupancy, having ownership transferred through inheritance, without precise usage (in a dilapidated but habitable state), held by the owner for future use by an employee(s), relation(s) or friend(s), uninhabited due to occupant(s) leaving for a community setting (retirement home, long hospital stay, etc.).

People counted in the 2011 census are those who were usually resident in the territory of the country concerned at the time of the census. The principal residence is the place where a person spends their daily rest time, not including temporary absences for leisure, holidays, visiting friends, work, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage.

The term real estate vacancy includes two different categories: commercial vacancy and residential vacancy.

The latter is the result of complex processes; it is divided into the following categories<sup>2</sup>, used by the majority of census surveys:

- Frictional vacancy relates to the vacant dwellings that are on the market, available to buy or rent:
  - This is considered 'normal' vacancy for market mobility, and relates to the delays in renting or buying
  
- Structural vacancy relates to dwellings that are vacant but not on the market:
  - Vacancy related to obsolescence or depreciation (housing that is outside the market due to being too expensive, obsolete, run down, or unsuited to demand; housing awaiting destruction)
  - Vacancy related to transformation of the property (housing under renovation; housing in a static situation - joint ownership, inheritance, owner in a retirement home, etc.)
  - Vacancy related to owner holding on to property (reserving it for personal use or for use by a friend; speculative retention; to transmit it to heirs)
  - Vacancy related to disinterest (high-income owner, low economic returns, uninterested in taking care of it)

There are any number of reasons to explain the vacancy of property with structural vacancy being potentially the result of the owner's unique personal circumstances (inheritance, ongoing or expensive renovation project, health/employment/income problems, lack of interest, etc.) or due to property speculation<sup>3</sup>, the owner being unknown, etc. According to national and regional contexts, vacancy rates are not systematically concentrated on the same types of property: in France, and also in Germany, the general rise in vacancy rates is concentrated in the least attractive part of the private sector, i.e. properties that are dilapidated in the context of overall improvements in the quality of housing stock. In other countries that have been badly affected by the 2008 financial crisis and the bursting of the property bubble (such as Spain, Ireland, Portugal and Greece), the increase in the vacancy rate is due to the abandonment of brand new complexes and to banks repossessing a large portion of the housing stock as owners are no longer able to repay their mortgages.

Occasional vacancy must also be added to frictional and structural vacancy; this is linked to tourism and leads to non-use of secondary residences. This concerns areas with high tourist flows which often overlap with large cities where the market is under pressure. Recently, several European capitals whose markets are being disrupted by mass tourism while demand for rented accommodation is ever increasing, have legislated to fight the phenomenon of short-term subletting to tourists. Buying and renting out apartments to tourists via online agencies such as Airbnb and Wimdu has become very profitable in recent years with companies managing several hundred properties of this type. The consequences for the local housing market are increased prices and growing pressure on supply for residents. In Berlin, which today finds itself facing a growing shortage of housing, 24,000 units are reported to be rented to tourists every year across all platforms, which would be enough to supply the demand for housing over a year<sup>4</sup>, if this accommodation was available for normal use. The city has had to take drastic measures – in keeping with Berlin's tradition of rent control – and establish a law to regulate the issue. Other capital cities such as Amsterdam, Barcelona, and recently Paris, have followed this lead.

<sup>2</sup> France's Observational and Statistical Service of the Ministry of the Environment, Energy and the Sea (France), *Etude - Mesurer la vacance dans les logements* [Study - Measuring housing vacancy], 2006, p.4.

<sup>3</sup> In England, 'buy to leave', hugely popular since the 1980s has been a factor in the increased vacancy rate.

<sup>4</sup> <https://theconversation.com/berlin-has-banned-homeowners-from-renting-out-flats-on-airbnb-heres-why-59204>

Table 2 - Seasonal/secondary residences and vacant dwellings as a proportion of total conventional dwellings

Country	Seasonal or secondary residences	Vacant dwellings	Of the total number of conventional dwellings	
			% that are secondary residences	% that are vacant dwellings
Bulgaria	x	1,220,416	x	31.4%
Czech Republic	169,468	482,469	3.6%	10.1%
Denmark	212,361	152,154	7.4%	5.3%
Greece	1,351,845	897,968	21.2%	14.1%
France	3,175,662	2,455,233	9.5%	7.3%
Ireland	70,517	275,339	3.5%	13.8%
Croatia	334,009	416,343	14.9%	18.5%
Cyprus	78,670	55,267	18.3%	12.8%
Malta	29,848	41,232	13.3%	18.4%
Portugal	1,133,300	735,128	19.3%	12.5%
Romania	880,216	547,194	10.1%	6.3%
Slovakia	x	196,466	x	10.1%
Finland	22,833	247,475	0.8%	8.8%
Luxembourg	1,999	14,079	0.9%	6.3%

Source: Eurostat Census Hub, Census 2011. Data are not available for Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Spain, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, The Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Bulgaria and Slovakia because no distinction is made in the census between vacant dwellings and secondary/occasional dwellings.

Under Table 2 which shows the number of secondary residences and vacant dwellings in the twelve European countries for which there are statistics available, it is clear that in certain countries with high tourist flows, the proportion of secondary residences is much bigger than that of vacant dwellings (Greece, France, Cyprus, Portugal). These figures give cause for alarm: **21.2% of dwellings are secondary residences and 14.1% are vacant dwellings in Greece, where 6,7% of the total population experienced severe housing deprivation in 2015 and where 95% of poor households spend more than 40% of their income on housing**<sup>5</sup>.

The proportion of households that are vacant is above the 10% threshold in the Czech Republic, Greece, Croatia, Cyprus, Malta, Portugal and Slovakia.

The solutions described in this paper generally relate to structural vacancy. Several innovative initiatives, not listed here, have also been put in place to deal with frictional vacancy and secondary residences (for example CALM in France, which is a homestay network for refugees<sup>6</sup>).

<sup>5</sup> Eurostat EU-SILC.

<sup>6</sup> <http://singa.fr/la-communaute/calm-comme-a-la-maison/>

The phenomenon of real estate vacancy is international but does not have the same causes and implications across countries. In areas where housing supply does not meet demand, vacant properties are a minor but interesting windfall that could be mobilised to increase housing supply, particularly in the context of promoting 'sustainable cities' where efforts are made to limit urban sprawl. Demand for housing is concentrated in areas that are attractive in terms of employment which in turn fuels abandonment of the less attractive areas. In areas with slack markets, often facing abandonment, the housing supply, while not necessarily of better quality, is easier to access due to supply being greater than demand. In this way, real estate vacancy takes on another dimension; it is both a factor in and a consequence of urban abandonment because it is the first sign of desertion of urban spaces while being a cause of property devaluation, which can have a snowball effect in an area and feed into it being further abandoned. Both residential and commercial vacancy can cause 'spiralling urban decline'<sup>7</sup>, as has occurred in medium-sized towns since the 1980s as a result of deindustrialisation. In the 2000s, the fight against vacancy was formalised at governmental level in different countries via various policies, from specific mandates delegating management of vacant properties to local authorities in England<sup>8</sup>, to vast redevelopment and urban renewal programmes focussing on demolition in Germany<sup>9</sup>.

**The solutions mentioned in this paper were chosen in order to explore situations across different regions: Brussels, Paris, Barcelona and Rome are European capitals with tight markets** that are strongly affected by tourism while Stoke-on-Trent, Leipzig and Charleroi represent areas with slack residential markets. While real estate vacancy is associated with a distortion between housing supply and demand which can become problematic once it passes certain thresholds, it can also be seen as contributing to the resilience of urban spaces. Urban resilience lies in the absorption and adaption capacity of a city to external and internal change. The fact that a vacant building is a building in transition makes it potentially usable and adaptable to social, economic or even environmental ends<sup>10</sup>. Real estate vacancy, for example, is regularly mentioned as a potential solution to housing refugees and migrants arriving in Europe en masse. Yet it is difficult to identify any large-scale initiatives to this end, beyond a few emergency solutions in some German cities<sup>11</sup>.

**In this paper, we understand real estate vacancy in its broadest sense - including residential and commercial, private and public. In all these situations, it represents both a social and an economic opportunity to provide affordable housing, as is shown by the initiatives described.**

---

<sup>7</sup> Häußermann et Siebel, 1988.

<sup>8</sup> Henderson S., State intervention in vacant residential properties: an evaluation of empty dwelling management orders in England, *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Politique fédérale de la *Stadtumbau Ost*. Roth H., Les « villes rétrécissantes » en Allemagne, *Géocarrefour*, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Huuhka S., *Vacant residential buildings as potential reserves : a geographical and statistical study*, Building Research & Information 2015.

<sup>11</sup> <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/01/06/building-a-new-life-in-communisms-ghost-towns-east-germany-migrant-refugee-crisis/>

# INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO MAKE USE OF VACANT HOUSING IN THE LONG TERM

ENGLAND | STOKE-ON-TRENT | HOMESTEADING & EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY | SLACK RESIDENTIAL MARKET

<p><b>Type of measure</b></p> <p><b>Implementation period:</b> 2007-ongoing</p>	<p>Multi-level municipal strategy, benefitting from a range of approaches that are both incentivising and coercive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participative strategies</li> </ul> <p><b>Clusters Programme:</b> Two main areas were identified in Stoke-on-Trent as suffering from advanced urban decline and having a high number of vacant properties (Portland Street and Bond Street). Government subsidy (Clusters of Empty Homes Programme): £1.5 million/City Council investment: £1.5Million = £3 million for these areas to stem the problem of vacancy through a swathe of interventions.</p> <p>Objective of the City Council: return 124 vacant homes to use, which would stimulate regeneration of these areas and improve the housing conditions and health of their inhabitants.</p> <p><b>Homesteading scheme:</b> Innovative method for the Portland Street area: city residents could buy a property (of the 35 properties selected) for £1 and access a loan of up to £30,000 for renovations. The programme was highly successful with about 600 people applying (see eligibility criteria below).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Localised strategies: local tax, using data from the local tax, advice and assistance, National Empty Homes Loan Fund, approving renters, deposit system, coercive measures, accreditation plan for owners in the region, bringing accredited owners together with service providers, making specialised agents available to owners, effective partnerships with various local/regional/national stakeholders in housing etc. The Empty Homes Team deals with evaluations on a case-by-case basis in order to ensure that the most appropriate actions are established.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Aim of the measure</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to property ownership and rental at an affordable price.</li> <li>Reduce the number of long-term vacant properties within the city and increase supply for a decent private housing sector.</li> <li>Strategically orient provision of services towards areas suffering from abandonment by people who no longer want to live there (due to the spiralling urban decline that these areas are stuck in).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Number of properties returned to use</b></p>	<p>Regarding the overall strategy, between 2006 and 2013, 574 vacant properties (vacant for more than six months) were returned to use in Stoke-on-Trent. Between 2013 and 2014, at least 150 were returned to use. Aim for 2014-2017: between 450 and 600 properties to be returned to use.</p>
<p><b>Background</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A 3.5% demographic decline in Stoke-on-Trent since 1991. 2011 was the first year that the population increased since 1931 with 249,008 inhabitants.</li> <li>At national level, in November 2012, there were 23,178,396 properties in England of which 710,140 were vacant i.e. 3.06% of the total housing stock. 259,842 of these vacant properties were vacant for six months or more<sup>12</sup>.</li> <li>At regional level, in November 2012, there were 72,289 vacant properties in the West Midlands, of which 26,637 had been vacant for six months or more<sup>13</sup>.</li> <li>In Stoke-on-Trent, there are 113,000 properties (76% of which are private housing); 4,836 properties are empty (of which, 4,405 are in the private sector); so, 91% of the total number of vacant properties are in the private sector. Of this figure, 2,492 have been vacant for six months or more<sup>14</sup>.</li> </ul>

<sup>12</sup> Empty Homes statistics - November 2012.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Council tax statistics, March 2013, Stoke-on-Trent Private Sector Empty Homes Strategy 2014-19.

<p><b>Political and institutional context</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leading role of The Empty Homes Agency, an independent charitable body that works in partnership with the authorities to bring vacant properties onto the market for the benefit of those in need of affordable housing. Nomination of 'empty homes officers' who identify properties that have been vacant for more than six months, prepare strategies, negotiate and establish re-use of the property with the owners; the existence of a representative community body, the 'Empty Homes Network'.</li> <li>• Policy priority of the Stoke-on-Trent City Council to reduce the number of long-term vacant properties and acquire vacant properties.</li> <li>• Support of central government for strategies returning vacant properties to use: 2011 Housing strategy devoted a significant amount to fighting real estate vacancy: £160 million planned to renovate 11,200 problematic vacant properties; information and practical advice offered to local authorities by the Homes and Communities Agency (for example, the Empty Homes Toolkit which offers practical advice on returning vacant properties to use).</li> <li>• Withdrawal of the government's Housing Market Renewal programme.</li> <li>• £30,000 renovation loan or an agreed renovation with the local authority.</li> <li>• Mixed-use explicitly prioritised.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Initial property type</b></p>	<p>Vacant residential property, mainly private; however the services provided by the Empty Homes Team are not exclusively oriented towards the private sector. It is also possible that they could be applied to vacant properties owned by an accredited provider. For the Homesteading/£1 homes, the stock was acquired by the Council for the duration of the programme.</p>
<p><b>Local market factors</b></p>	<p>Slack market, low prices, very large private rental sector; people involved in the project had not participated in the private rental market before.</p>
<p><b>Viability/financial accessibility</b></p>	<p>At the outset, the eligibility criteria (which were revised twice to broaden the strategy) were:                  _Have lived in the city for at least three years;                  _Have been continuously employed over the last two years;                  _Have an annual gross salary of between £18,000 and £25,000.                  Example: a young buyer, in addition to buying their house for £1, repays £290 per month to the Council (for about ten years) for the renovation loan which is equivalent to £100 less than rental costs.</p>
<p><b>Extent of autonomy and empowerment</b></p>	<p>Regarding the Homesteading programme, the initial intention was for the buyers to have a large degree of autonomy in the renovations, but in practice it seems that this degree of autonomy has been reduced.</p>
<p><b>Reflections: reviews/transferability</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The homesteading model has been tried elsewhere in England over the last twenty years: in Manchester and Sheffield in the 1990s, then in Liverpool, Stoke-on-Trent, Leeds, etc. Different 'self-help housing' and 'homesteading' associations and projects have been carried out in the north of England, like Girescope and Canopy, which train vulnerable people in DIY of vacant buildings.</li> <li>• The main inspiration came from the Netherlands and the work carried out by Ineke Hulshof and her architecture firm, which has been looking at these issues since 1990 and implemented a DIY renovation of blocks of 2,000 apartments in the rundown Spangen quarter in Rotterdam (see <a href="http://emptyhomes.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/EmptyHomes2011-InekeHulshof2.pdf">http://emptyhomes.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/EmptyHomes2011-InekeHulshof2.pdf</a>).</li> </ul>
<p><b>For more information</b></p>	<p>Website of The Empty Homes Agency: <a href="http://www.emptyhomes.com/what-we-do-2/homesteading/">http://www.emptyhomes.com/what-we-do-2/homesteading/</a>                  Video presentation of the Girescope and Canopy associations: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-NFiOWFbc6Y">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-NFiOWFbc6Y</a></p>

<sup>15</sup> The 'Housing Market Renewal' programme was a controversial scheme of demolition, renovation and construction that was run between 2002 and 2011 by the central government in order to 'renew failing housing markets in nine designated areas of the North and Midlands of England'.

# INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO MAKE USE OF VACANT HOUSING IN THE LONG TERM

## FRANCE | PARIS | 'MULTILOC' INITIATIVE | TIGHT MARKET WITH HIGH TOURIST FLOWS

<p><b>Type of measure</b></p> <p><b>Implementation period:</b> October 2015/ongoing</p>	<p>Incentivising initiative to bring vacant private housing into use in inner Paris, developed by the City of Paris administration and in partnership with a network of real estate professionals. It is a grant provided to owners for putting their property on the rental market.</p> <p>At the outset, the City of Paris signs a partnership agreement with the real estate stakeholders (real estate professionals or accredited service providers). The real estate service provider finds and manages the properties and Paris City Council pays a flat-rate bonus of €1,000 (€1,200 if the property was vacant for more than six months) for each new property found and put into service.</p> <p>The landlord, who agrees to the measure by signing a three-year management mandate with a real estate professional, directly receives cumulative bonuses from Paris City Council: a flat-rate bonus for signing up of €2,000 (on signing the first management mandate), bonus for renovating long-term empty properties of €7,000 (extra bonus of €1,000 where there has been improvement in the energy performance), bonus for renovation works or decoration of €2,000 to €3,000, flat fee of €250 to carry out technical assessments. Also, a flat rate of €400 is put in place to partially cover the rent arrears guarantee, which provides a degree of security thereby encouraging owners to sign up to the initiative. With each renewal of the three-year management mandate, a flat-rate renewal bonus is allocated to the landlord. In the case of a public service contract with ANAH [France's National Housing Agency] (i.e. subsidised or highly subsidised rent), there is the possibility of a tax break of 30% on the rental income.</p>
<p><b>Aim of the measure</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting access to rented properties for working class people and young workers.</li> <li>• Fight long-term vacancy in Paris properties.</li> <li>• Increase the supply of accessible housing in the private sector.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Number of properties returned to use</b></p>	<p>25 properties between October 2015 and June 2016. At least 30 real estate agencies are currently offering the initiative.</p>
<p><b>Background</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paris is the second most expensive city in Europe where housing is concerned. Furthermore, according to a study by INSEE [France's National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies] and APUR [the Paris Urban Planning Agency] carried out in 2012, 28,800 people had spent the night prior to the survey in accommodation or other place not intended as housing, representing an increase of 81% since 2001.</li> <li>• Real estate vacancy in Paris is particularly high for such a tight market: 14% of conventional dwellings were unoccupied in 2011, with 6.6% being secondary or occasional residences and 7.4% being vacant properties. By comparison, Saint-Etienne, a town in the Loire <i>département</i> experiencing abandonment, had the same vacancy rate in 2011 but the majority of these properties were actually vacant with very few secondary residences. This level of vacancy, including secondary residences, is particularly significant in the most expensive <i>arrondissements</i>: the vacancy rate in the 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> <i>arrondissements</i> was above 25% in 2011, i.e. one property in four. The rate of secondary or occasional residences in these districts rose from 16% to 18.5% of the total number of conventional dwellings. The vacancy rate in 11 out of 19 <i>arrondissements</i> was over 15%<sup>16</sup>.</li> <li>• Properties with small surface areas are particularly affected by vacancy: in 2015 an APUR [Paris Urban Planning Agency] study estimated that there are 114,400 empty '<i>chambres de bonne</i>' [maid's rooms often on the top floor of bourgeois homes] in Paris, i.e. 85% are unoccupied. Often not meeting living standards, 49% of these spaces pass the 'habitability threshold' set by the decent housing decree (most of these spaces are between 9m<sup>2</sup> and 14m<sup>2</sup>). An engineering study on putting them back into use is ongoing. Paris City Council wants to either broaden the Multiloc' initiative to include these spaces or to incentivise social landlords to acquire these properties from owners who wish to get rid of the unused floor space upstairs.</li> </ul>

<sup>16</sup> The statistics on vacancy rates of conventional dwellings are taken from INSEE's 2011 Census.

<b>Political and institutional context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment by the current administration when entering office to make housing a priority of its mandate (commitment of €2.5 million for housing and creating 10,000 new housing units every year).</li> <li>• Annual decrees to limit rent increases at lease renewal have been made since 2012, and rent controls came into force in Paris on 1 August 2015.</li> <li>• For Multiloc', central partnership role between the City, real estate service providers and owners who consider it a win-win initiative.</li> </ul>
<b>Initial property type</b>	Frictional private residential vacancy (of at least one month) and long-term vacancy of over six months for housing located in inner Paris with a floor space of more than 14 m <sup>2</sup> . Standards must be respected and rental is possible furnished, unfurnished or as house/flat shares.
<b>Local market factors</b>	Extremely tight market with very high prices: in 2014, average rent on the open market in Paris rose to €22.1/m <sup>2</sup> , which is double the rate in the provinces <sup>17</sup> . Accessibility varies depending on <i>arrondissement</i> and area.
<b>Viability/financial accessibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owners agree to put their properties on the market at a rental rate 20% lower than the reference rent set on an annual basis by an <i>arrêté préfectoral</i> [order by the Prefect].</li> <li>• Renters must meet the means-tested conditions as set out in the maximum income ceiling of the PLI [intermediate rental loan], whether or not they have applied for social housing. Signature of 3-year or 6-year year common law leases.</li> <li>• This results in rents lowered by €100 in previously inaccessible areas for young working people and the working classes (example: rent of about €385 instead of €520 for a 16 m<sup>2</sup> studio in Paris' 16<sup>th</sup> <i>arrondissement</i>).</li> </ul>
<b>Extent of autonomy and empowerment</b>	None
<b>Echos de l'action : critiques/ transférabilité</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given the very recent launch of the initiative, no evaluation is yet available.</li> <li>• This initiative, oriented towards the working classes and young working people, was established to urgently provide access to affordable private rented accommodation to a section of Paris' residents.</li> <li>• Given the number of properties returned to use, the effectiveness of the initiative seems disappointing when compared to the objectives set. This could be explained by the fact that the rent that Multiloc' owners set is 20% lower than median rent, while leaseholders can legally rent at the median rate plus 20% (sometimes even more). Therefore, the initiative represents a rental loss of almost 40% which could be a deterrent.</li> </ul>
<b>For more information</b>	Multiloc' website [in French]: <a href="http://www.paris.fr/multiloc">http://www.paris.fr/multiloc</a>

<sup>17</sup> 2015 key figures - OLAP (Paris Area Rent Observatory).

# INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO MAKE USE OF VACANT HOUSING IN THE LONG TERM

BELGIUM | BRUSSELS (ANDERLECHT) | VERHEYDEN PROJECT - COMMUNITY LAND TRUST BRUXELLES (CLTB) | TIGHT RESIDENTIAL MARKET

<p><b>Type of measure</b></p> <p><i>Implementation period: October 2015/ongoing</i></p>	<p>Establishment of a renovation project for a vacant building with seven housing units, instigated by the Community Land Trust Bruxelles ASBL [not-for-profit organisation] and the relevant public interest foundation. Incentivising measures, funded by innovative and adapted financial packages. Seven housing units for development in a building that has been vacant for several years (a single unit was occupied by a concierge).</p>
<p><b>Aim of the measure</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable access to property: by limiting the sale price of the housing units and by putting a ceiling on the resale price through anti-speculative clauses, the CLTB offers quality housing that is affordable, generation after generation. Consequently, it offers communities working with the CLTB an alternative to house price inflation.</li> <li>• The fight against housing exclusion: Seven households that benefit from the initiative have incomes between the minimum-income allowance and the ceiling for accessing social housing. Once CLTB is owner of the building and prior to renovation works, it is occupied temporarily for temporary and affordable housing (for two years).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Number of properties returned to use</b></p>	<p>Seven apartments in an apartment building (only for this project; the CLTB is currently working on several other housing purchase/renovation projects).</p>
<p><b>Background</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Founding principle of the CLTB: separating ownership of land (bought by the public interest foundation, CLTB) and ownership of the walls (bought by the beneficiaries in co-ownership).</li> <li>• Identifying the building on Rue Verheyden as a potential site for developing a community land trust project dates back to the founding of the Community Land Trust in Brussels in 2010. In fact, the consortium that carried out the feasibility study on the transfer of the American CLT model over to the Brussels context (instigated by the Secretary of State for Housing), had retained this project as one of its case studies.</li> <li>• The CLTB's first subsidised action, with complex project development taking place within one year.</li> <li>• Project based in Anderlecht, a Brussels <i>commune</i> [district] where the majority of the population experience financial insecurity which manifests in housing conditions. With its industrialised heyday long since passed, the <i>commune</i> has issues with, for example, converting its industrial wastelands. In 2014, the unemployment rate in Anderlecht rose to 23% (compared to 20.8% in the Brussels region).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Political and institutional context</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subsidies by the Brussels Capital Region.</li> <li>• Multiple partnerships: Housing fund as a loans body, the Samenlevingsopbouw-Brussels association as a partner individually accompanying applicant households, local district committee, and architecture and consultancy firms.</li> <li>• Mainly led by the CLTB and the expertise of its employees (some have long involvement and in-depth experience in the fight against housing exclusion and the re-use of vacant properties in the Brussels area).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Initial property type</b></p>	<p>Private religious vacant property: the public service foundation, CLT Brussels, is owner of the asset having purchased it from the not-for-profit association 'Association des Œuvres Paroissiales (AOP) BRUXELLES-OUEST' [WEST BRUSSELS Association of Parish Works].</p>

<b>Local market factors</b>	For the Brussels situation, see below. In Anderlecht, social housing makes up a significant share of the <i>commune's</i> housing stock, with the legacy of its older housing stock along with large functionalist real estate and saturated rental supply.
<b>Viability/financial accessibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective financial accessibility, complex and innovative financial packages, created to be adapted to the beneficiaries' financial resources:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_Contribution by the households (for the management company, Le Nid, to finance architects and renovation works/and for directly purchasing their share): energy renovation works (€250,000)/housing fund mortgage credit (€1,100,000)/household contribution (€20,000). Le Nid, the management company, is thus supported by household contributions and CLTB subsidies.</li> <li>_Purchase of the apartments by households at prices depending on their rental value (for example, the cheapest 3-bedroom apartment was sold for €139,000 all fees included and the most expensive for €202,000. Monthly repayments over a 25-year loan were therefore about €600 for the former and about €850 for the latter. Some households spread their payments over a longer period (more than 25 years) to reduce the monthly payment.</li> <li>_Shared savings scheme (€90 per month per household) for an initial co-ownership fund, a percentage of which is at their disposal to cover the costs of moving and manage extra costs (rental of their current home etc.).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Fully sustainable, as it provides access to property outside of the speculation and inflation of the free market.</li> </ul>
<b>Extent of autonomy and empowerment</b>	Participation of the households involved is vital with creation of Le Nid management company (which succeeded the de facto organisation of the same name) bringing together all future owners (the seven future purchasing households which are also brought together in a savings group) and CLTB, the public service foundation, as future owner of the rear building. The management company is the contracting authority for the renovation project.
<b>Echos de l'action : critiques/ transférabilité</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovation of the project and success of the financial package.</li> <li>• Main difficulty encountered: delay in obtaining the building permit which led to the loss of €20,000 in subsidies.</li> <li>• The Community Land Trust model was imported from the United States and various European trials have already been carried out; for example, the Granby 4 Streets CLT in England won the Turner Prize in 2015.</li> </ul>
<b>For more information</b>	CLTB website: <a href="https://communitylandtrust.wordpress.com/projets-projecten/projet-verheyden-project-verheyden/">https://communitylandtrust.wordpress.com/projets-projecten/projet-verheyden-project-verheyden/</a>

# INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO MAKE USE OF VACANT HOUSING IN THE LONG TERM

ITALY | ROME & LAZIO REGION | 'AUTO-RÉCUPÉRO' | TIGHT MARKET WITH HIGH TOURIST FLOWS

<p><b>Type of measure</b></p> <p><i>Implementation period: 1990s-ongoing</i></p>	<p>In 1998, a legislative text was passed in the Lazio region, authorising a community to set itself up in a vacant public building, on condition that it is transformed into a cooperative (with the community becoming a legally recognised body). The owner remains the public body granting usage rights to the property. Cooperative members take charge of renovating and sharing the spaces, if necessary. The cooperative signs an occupancy agreement with the owner specifying the tenure arrangements of the place.</p>
<p><b>Aim of the measure</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulate illegal occupation of vacant housing.</li> <li>• Reuse vacant public buildings to benefit populations suffering from impoverishment and exclusion.</li> <li>• Use vacant and dilapidated public buildings, preferably located in central districts to avoid further construction on the outskirts and exclusion of the poorest to the city's outskirts.</li> <li>• Promotion of the right to housing for all and of a city with greater humanity and solidarity.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Number of properties returned to use</b></p>	<p>The <i>Piazza Sonnino</i> cooperative: 12 housing units (600m<sup>2</sup> of habitable surface)          Tecla cooperative: 39 housing units (5000m<sup>2</sup>: garages, shared spaces - sports room, various communal activity rooms etc.)          Several others: Vivere 2000 cooperative, Inventare L'habitare, Diametro, etc.</p>
<p><b>Background</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People in situations of housing exclusion/housing deprivation (evicted families, young people with no fixed abode, etc.) come together to occupy vacant public buildings with the support of organisations that work to defend the right to housing. Movement from illegal occupation to legal cooperative status, following a power struggle and long lobbying work by organisations working with the local authority.</li> <li>• Accompanying renovation: the surrounds, the facades and costs from maintaining the common areas of the building are the responsibility of the public ownership body. Renovation of the interior of the units and decoration are the responsibility of the occupants. They can choose to renovate it themselves or employ companies of their choice to do so, on condition that the work schedule is presented to the owner</li> </ul>
<p><b>Political and institutional context</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Italy, the regions have had competency with regard to housing since 1998 (in a context of budget cutbacks in the Italian state).</li> <li>• Regional elections in Latium at the end of the 1990s: the centre-left list (L'Union Inquilini), made up of militants of the effective right to housing, created a coalition that obtained a majority within the regional assembly and which led to a unanimous vote on the 'autorecupero' law.</li> <li>• In 2001, the Berlusconi government created an international financial consortium, the SIP, whose objective was to sell 150,000 social housing units, owned by semi-state provident societies which had legally held them since the end of World War II and to reverse 20% of benefits in the social housing sector. This led to a wave of evictions: between 60,000 and 80,000 Italian families were directly affected by this process of privatisation.</li> <li>• In 2008, a change of team in Rome's administration led to a renewal of the civil militancy of housing for all.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Initial property type</b></p>	<p>Public real estate vacancy (housing, schools, offices).</p>

<p><b>Local market factors</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2011 in Rome, between 50,000 and 60,000 vacant housing units were counted. When secondary residences and empty offices were added to this, 150,000 properties were vacant.</li> <li>• The average cost of rent in Rome in 2011 rose to between €800 and €1100 per month on the city's outskirts, from €900 to €1500 per month in the inner suburbs and from €1800 per month in the central <i>arrondissements</i>. That same year, Rome's courts delivered 8,000 eviction notices, of which 80% were for non-payment of rent (2,500 were carried out via police force). Between 1989 and 1999, 100,000 evictions were carried out in Rome (either through law and order or through sale of the building).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Viability/financial accessibility</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to a public service contract with a local authority and being guaranteed by a public body, bank loans are easier to get and negotiated directly by the cooperatives, and not on an individual basis by the occupants. Repayment of the loan and payment of charges by each occupant.</li> <li>• Partnership with banking establishments that are subject to ethical economics and finance, to have access to funds with municipal or regional guarantees and to the services of ethical banks (Banca etica in Italy): the repayment of the loans only starts when the building has been renovated (DIY or otherwise), the ethical bank therefore takes charge of pre-financing during the period necessary for carrying out the property transaction, and the (fixed) interest rates as well as the depreciation plan are adjusted according to the income of the cooperative members.</li> <li>• Financial investment of between 30% and 50% below market price (including comparison with the social rental sector).</li> <li>• Example of the Piazza Sonnino cooperative: rents are three times lower than in the local rental sector (housing is situated in the historic Trastevere quarter of Rome, where private monthly rental costs are between €1500 and €1800).</li> <li>• In certain cases, there is no rent to pay, but rather a contribution to the management costs which go towards repaying part of the loan for renovating each apartment.</li> <li>• Very low cost to the public ownership body which already owns the asset and which only has to invest in internal renovation works.</li> <li>• Renovation works that comply with the main environmental standards.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Extent of autonomy and empowerment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Movement that was created and invested in by people directly affected by housing exclusion. Direct involvement of the occupants/inhabitants at all stages and with all decisions in the process.</li> <li>• Autorecupero refers to a practice which enables a building's inhabitants to participate in renovation. It can benefit from 'time banks', i.e. on the work of cooperative members. In addition to creating housing, social connections and social reintegration are made possible and strengthened.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reflections: reviews/transferability</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awaiting a law on regulation of conflict situations.</li> <li>• 'The model of cooperative housing is absolutely transferable to the French context, although it cannot be enshrined in law. It must be initiated by the people themselves.' Yann Maury, Interview in <i>Actualités Sociales Hebdo</i>, December 2012.</li> <li>• Autorecupero is a local example of a global movement occurring in different countries, where housing cooperatives are implementing the right to housing. It is an alternative to seeing housing as solely a real estate market commodity. See Argentina, United States and England (Community Land Trusts) etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b>For more information</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yann Maury's work 'Les coopératives d'habitants, des outils pour l'abondance, au service du logement abordable' [Housing cooperatives, tools for abundance in the service of affordable housing] <a href="http://chairecoop.hypotheses.org/69">http://chairecoop.hypotheses.org/69</a></li> <li>• Documentary film 'La Bocca della Verità' [The Mouth of Truth], Yann Maury, 2011, <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSU5aWQeDp0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSU5aWQeDp0</a></li> </ul>

# TEMPORARY OCCUPANCY SOLUTIONS IN THE SHORT AND MEDIUM TERM

## EUROPE | CAMELOT EUROPE | DIVERSE MARKET

<p><b>Type of measure</b></p> <p><b>Implementation period:</b> 1993-ongoing</p>	<p>Temporary property guardianship contracts, offered by Camelot Europe, an international company managing unoccupied real estate assets. Incentivising market tool. Property guardianship involves setting up temporary residents, selected and managed by Camelot Europe, into temporarily vacant spaces in order to keep these spaces secure and maintained. Camelot Europe inspects the building and takes care of any potential adjustments required to make the spaces temporarily habitable. The temporary residents live in the space, sharing it with other residents.</p>
<p><b>Aim of the measure</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To maintain the security of temporarily vacant spaces and to reduce the risks and the costs</li> <li>• Preserve the building from natural degradation and squatting</li> <li>• Preserve the value of property assets</li> </ul> <p>Target: temporary housing for mobile employees, trainees, temp workers (there are several eligibility criteria including proof of regular income)</p>
<p><b>Number of properties returned to use</b></p>	<p>On April 1 2016, 1,141 vacant spaces were available (for all European branches, see below). Growing interest from property owners (no commitment is necessary on their part).</p>
<p><b>Background</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Camelot is a very controversial model, often referred to as the anti-squat agency, whose role in housing has been widely condemned given the lack of rights afforded to 'guardians' (very short notice to leave, no respect for their private life, several restrictions, conditional deposit to be given and interview for eligibility etc.).</li> <li>• In France, associations use temporary occupancy agreements to sub-let local authority property and to use it for temporary housing needs. The model is therefore not new but has taken on a profit-making dimension in the Camelot case.</li> <li>• A powerful lobbyist at legislative level, Camelot has succeeded for example in having a 'Camelot article' passed in French law: the Molle law on mobilisation for housing and the fight against exclusion integrated 'article 101' which allows for property guardianship.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Initial property type</b></p>	<p>Mixed-use property; particularly private property but potentially public. Offices, shops, schools, vacant buildings.</p>
<p><b>Local market factors</b></p>	<p>Camelot has a presence in the United Kingdom, Scotland, Ireland, France, Belgium and Germany.</p>
<p><b>Viability/financial accessibility</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective financial accessibility: in France the average monthly rent for a Camelot property is €201 (including charges), regardless of the location or size of the room.</li> <li>• Very weak tenant security: very short notice to leave, no rental protection allowed for.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Extent of autonomy and empowerment</b></p>	<p>None.</p>

**Reflections:  
reviews/transferability**

- Its success with property owners has led Camelot, originally created in the Netherlands, to expand into different European countries: United Kingdom, Scotland, Ireland, France, Belgium, and Germany. The group is now known as Camelot Europe.
- Camelot cannot easily be considered a solution to housing exclusion. Having to leave the accommodation with less than one month's notice and the requirement that a family member agrees to rehome the applicant in such a case makes it unworkable for the majority of households in need and for new arrivals to the area. In addition, the rules are very strict: families with children are not accepted, parties are forbidden, etc.
- Initiatives of this type have increased greatly in Europe: more social models of the initiative have come to fruition such as London's 'Dotdotdot' social enterprise, which enables 'guardians' to pay minimal rent in return for 16 hours of volunteering per month. This initiative has proven to be very attractive for a capital city where demand is very strong and prices very high.

**For more information**

- Video by Abel Heijkamp on the consequences of the lack of renter rights in the Camelot model: <https://vimeo.com/9649993>
- Website of Dotdotdot: <http://dotdotdotproperty.com/guardians/>

# TEMPORARY OCCUPANCY SOLUTIONS IN THE SHORT AND MEDIUM TERM

## BELGIUM | BRUSSELS | TEMPORARY OCCUPANCY AGREEMENTS | TIGHT MARKET WITH HIGH TOURIST FLOWS

<p><b>Type of measure</b></p> <p><i>Implementation period: 1990s-ongoing</i></p>	<p>(Restrictive) contractual measures, temporary or precarious occupancy agreements are signed between an ASBL [not-for-profit organisation] and a vacant property owner's entity. It is a temporary contract agreement, covering a predetermined period (renewable in the short or long term), for occupancy of a vacant building to provide housing.</p>
<p><b>Aim of the measure</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to decent housing.</li> <li>• Mitigating the lack of government action and responding to the urgent need to house vulnerable people.</li> <li>• Improving the socioeconomic situation of beneficiaries.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Number of properties returned to use (non- exhaustive list)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Example of the Woninggen123Logements: since its creation in 2004, this not-for-profit association has committed to managing at least nine buildings (containing several housing units), leading to over 200 people being housed for periods of two months to nine years (the latter residency is ongoing at 123 Rue Royale in Brussels).</li> <li>➢ FéBUL<sup>18</sup> example: support for projects led by Woninggen123Logements + two pilot projects involving temporary occupancy of unoccupied social housing awaiting renovation are currently underway (two houses in Evere/12 apartments owned by Foyer Forestois (a social housing company in Forest, a commune south of Brussels).</li> <li>➢ 'Leegoed' example, a housing solidarity project: six apartments (with 15 inhabitants altogether) occupied temporarily, between SLO, the residents' association and Foyer Ixellois (social housing awaiting renovation).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Background</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dynamic and long-running history of collective squats being self-managed in Brussels, ongoing since the 1990s. The movement is led by activists of the right to housing for all.</li> <li>• At the root of the first illegal occupation of empty buildings was the fact that there were tools in place enabling public authorities to make vacant buildings available to homeless people (the Onkelinx law) or to renovate and rent them out on a social basis (public management law). However, these tools are not being used by the public authorities.</li> <li>• What started out as an act of civil disobedience to put housing exclusion issues on the agenda, has been recognised as affirming social interest in occupying vacant spaces for housing purposes. Transforming de facto occupancy into legal, recognised occupancy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Political and institutional context</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First pilot project in 2007 with signing the temporary occupancy agreement between 123 Rue Royale and the Wallonia Region as landlord. The agreement enabled the occupants to have secure occupation in the place for up to six months after the owner obtains projected planning permission to sustainably repurpose the building.</li> <li>• Since 28 July 2013, the Brussels housing code allows social housing companies to sign temporary occupancy contracts for their assets that are empty while awaiting renovation (article 10§2 paragraph 1 of the Brussels housing code).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Initial property type</b></p>	<p>Mixed-use vacant real estate, private or public. FéBUL has signed temporary occupancy agreements for social housing.</p>

<sup>18</sup> FéBUL (*Fédération Bruxelloise de l'Union pour le Logement*).

<p><b>Local market factors</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social housing makes up about 8% of the total in Brussels. 43.4% of the population are owners leaving more than half of the population in the private rental market. Less than half of social housing applicants are successful and for the 41,000 families on the social housing waiting list, the wait can be over 10 years.</li> <li>• In 2015, the average monthly rent for private accommodation in Brussels was €709, which makes Brussels one of the less expensive rental markets compared to its European counterparts. However, due to the relative impoverishment of the Brussels population compared to Belgium as a whole, the gap between the average and median rents paid for accommodation in Brussels and the average and median incomes of Brussels residents has grown continuously between 2004 and 2015 and in 2015 reached an index difference of 25 to 30.</li> <li>• According to estimates dating from 2009, the Brussels-Capital Region had 15,000 to 30,000 unoccupied housing units (80% in the private sector). In 2012, of the 39,404 social housing units in the Brussels-Capital Region, 3,397 were vacant (1,791 of which were undergoing renovations).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Viability/financial accessibility</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective financial accessibility: for example, the venture at 123 Rue Royale (Woningeng123Logements) has, since 2007, housed about 60 households at a low price of about €90 per inhabitant per month.</li> <li>• With regard to temporary occupancy of social housing, the framework agreement laying out the occupancy terms, established by FéBUL and the SLRB<sup>19</sup>, holds that the SISP [public service property company]<sup>20</sup> who signs a temporary occupancy agreement cannot demand rent or compensation from the not-for-profit organisation. This measure aims to ensure that the temporary occupancy in no way causes the SISP to delay major renovations, which is at all times the priority.</li> <li>• Viability is relatively weak as it is a temporary occupancy. Nonetheless, the agreements do provide a security net: for example, the occupancy agreement for 123 Rue Royale (between Woningeng123Logements and the Wallonia Region) provides that the owner gives six month's advance notice on obtaining planning permission for renovations or if a decision is made to sell.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Extent of autonomy and empowerment</b></p>	<p>Advanced and considered participative approaches modelled on the 'Leegoed' project<sup>21</sup>.</p>
<p><b>Reflections: reviews/transferability</b></p>	<p>"Temporary occupancy agreements are not considered the solution to the housing crisis. Only rehousing that is sustainable and financially acceptable can bring long-term stability and perspectives. But providing a roof, a minimum of security and comfort at a very low price, can be a temporary solution for a household and enable them to save money that can be used to repay debts and/or to rehouse themselves in a sustainable manner. "</p> <p>In Brussels, organisations involved in the occupancy projects are: FéBUL, Woningeng123Logements, Communa, Leegoed, JES Vzw, Bij Ons, Pigment, Samenlevingsopbouw, ULM, Au Quai, Toestand, Les skievs, Ul Saint-Gilles, CLT Brussel.</p> <p>Several other similar initiatives exist in other European countries: the 'Grand Voisins' project in the 14<sup>th</sup> <i>arrondissement</i> in Paris is an exclusive temporary occupancy experiment (prior to renovation works by Paris City Council) of a vacant hospital taken over by multiple associations for mixed-use purposes including housing and support for homeless people (600 people currently live there).</p>
<p><b>For more information</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website of the FéBUL housing projects: <a href="http://www.febul.be/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=91&amp;Itemid=90">http://www.febul.be/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=91&amp;Itemid=90</a></li> <li>• Articles by Thomas Dawance, former advisor to Brussels Capital Region's Housing Secretary and campaigner for Woningeng123Logements <a href="http://www.pyblik.be/Files/media/biblio/___sources/Dawance-Institutionnalisation-du-squat.doc">http://www.pyblik.be/Files/media/biblio/___sources/Dawance-Institutionnalisation-du-squat.doc</a></li> <li>• Website of the Parisian project, 'Les Grands Voisins': <a href="http://lesgrandsvoisins.org/">http://lesgrandsvoisins.org/</a></li> </ul>

<sup>19</sup> Housing company of the Brussels Region, supervisory authority of social housing.

<sup>20</sup> SISP [public service property company].

<sup>21</sup> Leegoed Project, 'Du vide au vidange, un projet d'habitat solidaire dans des bâtiments vides' < [https://issuu.com/jesvzw/docs/leegoedvidanges\\_fr\\_scherm](https://issuu.com/jesvzw/docs/leegoedvidanges_fr_scherm) >

<sup>22</sup> [www.febul.be](http://www.febul.be)

# TEMPORARY OCCUPANCY SOLUTIONS IN THE SHORT AND MEDIUM TERM

## GERMANY | LEIPZIG | 'AUSBAUHAUS' | TIGHT RESIDENTIAL MARKET

<p><b>Type of measure</b></p> <p><b>Implementation period:</b> 2011-ongoing</p>	<p>Temporary use of vacant buildings ('Zwischennutzung' in German), for a period of five to seven years, initiated by HausHalten, a registered voluntary association, created in 2004.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First model developed: 'Wächterhaus', involving guardianship of vacant buildings. The contract signed between the owner and HausHalten allows the association to use the building for a certain period, and the association, as intermediary, grants this right in turn to the users. The owner takes responsibility for refurbishing the buildings and surroundings. Users, in return for a low rent (about €2 per square metre per month), take the spaces as they are and then renovate them at their own cost.</li> <li>• Over the last 11 years, new models have been implemented such as the 'Wächterladen', which is a similar concept but applied to ground floor shops or the 'Atelierhäuser', buildings used solely for professional ends (artist studios or shops).</li> <li>• Since September 2011, the 'AusBauHaus' model (usually meaning a prefabricated house without finishings, left for the purchaser to complete) allows the owner to sign a regular rental contract without a time limitation. It is a longer term investment in the building on the part of the users, who make a significant commitment to the building's restoration. The rent, lower than market prices, is guaranteed not to increase for several years.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Aim of the measure</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid dilapidation of the built environment and potential vandalism.</li> <li>• Offer a solution to owners who do not have the means to carry out renovations on their building(s) and who do not want to sell or cannot sell.</li> <li>• Offer a solution to Leipzig's residents looking for low-cost living space, to carry out their plans, create a start-up, set up a workshop, find low-cost housing.</li> <li>• Revitalise previously unattractive areas.</li> <li>• Mixed-use.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Number of properties returned to use</b></p>	<p>Since 2001, 8 'AusBauHäuser' contracts have been signed. 26 vacant buildings have been renovated through the different initiatives. The association also advises groups who are looking to buy a building to create a collective living space. HausHalten is therefore overseeing about 100 assets.</p>
<p><b>Background</b></p>	<p>After World War II, the city of Leipzig, which had been highly industrialised, experienced a long period of both demographic and economic decline. More change came with the fall of the Wall in 1989 and the end of the socialist regime. The transition was fast and difficult with Leipzig losing 100,000 residents in 10 years, as well as 90% of its industrial jobs in less than five years.</p> <p>The phenomenon of vacancy is strongly connected to the historic context: in 2000 for example, there were 60,000 vacant buildings, i.e. 20% of the city's buildings. It is in this context that HausHalten was founded in 2004, in order to suggest alternatives to the frequent demolition of vacant buildings and to thus try conserve Leipzig's built environment which represents a strong part of the city's identity. Today, the demographic index has turned positive in Leipzig but there are still 35,000 vacant buildings located mainly in the less attractive districts or along the main thoroughfares.</p>
<p><b>Political and institutional context</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support from the City of Leipzig and European programmes.</li> <li>• A context of trying to renew urban policies in declining cities: Leipzig created a model of the 'perforated city' to adapt its urban framework to vacancy issues, which is in line with German federal policy of urban renewal aiming to buoy the East German property market by reducing vacancy through demolition (almost systematically targeting large housing estates) and secondarily, through redevelopment (targeting its industrial and architectural heritage)<sup>23</sup>.</li> </ul>

<sup>23</sup> The Social Union for Housing Europe (representing French social housing providers at EU level), Shrinking cities en Europe: Etudes de cas de Leipzig, Halle and Altena [Case studies of Leipzig, Halle and Altena], 2015, in French. <[http://union-habitat.eu/IMG/pdf/Shrinking\\_cities\\_en\\_Europe\\_-\\_Etudes\\_de\\_cas\\_Leipzig\\_Halle\\_et\\_Atena.pdf](http://union-habitat.eu/IMG/pdf/Shrinking_cities_en_Europe_-_Etudes_de_cas_Leipzig_Halle_et_Atena.pdf)>

<b>Initial property type</b>	Private residential real estate vacancy.
<b>Local market factors</b>	Very tight market; very high level of vacancy that has transformed the urban landscape (breaking it up between urban and industrial wastelands): in 2006, between 14% and 16% of the city's total stock was vacant.
<b>Viability/financial accessibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With regard to the AusBauHaus model:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_Financial accessibility remains to be seen: several user criticisms have surfaced. An example: for 136m<sup>2</sup>, the rent is €750 and the works (wallpaper, sanitation facilities, flooring etc.) are the responsibility of the renter. The waiting list of people interested in this type of housing already seems quite long, and care must be taken that it is not solely families with capital, who can make long-term plans, that have access to such housing.</li> <li>_Good viability: regular rental contract, without a fixed time frame.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Regarding the Wächterhaus model, this offers a medium-term solution (guardianship contract of between five and seven years).</li> </ul>
<b>Extent of autonomy and empowerment</b>	Independence with regard to renovations, when the contract allows users to transform the space (at their own cost).
<b>Reflections: reviews/transferability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interesting model for flexibility and in enabling mixed-use of the building but not really suitable for making affordable housing quickly available for people in need.</li> <li>• Suitable initiative for areas with a high rate of structural vacancy.</li> <li>• Model that is spreading to other similar cities in Germany (Halle for example).</li> </ul>
<b>For more information</b>	Website of the registered voluntary association, HausHalten: <a href="http://www.haushalten.org/de/english_summary.asp">http://www.haushalten.org/de/english_summary.asp</a>

# ASSET MANAGEMENT AGENCIES AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE AFFORDABLE HOUSING

SPAIN | BARCELONA | 'LA SAREB ES NUESTRA' [THE BAD BANK IS OURS] | TIGHT MARKET WITH HIGH TOURIST FLOWS

<p><b>Type of measure</b></p> <p><b>Implementation period:</b> 2015-ongoing</p>	<p>Partnership between the public authorities and a 'bad bank' or national asset management agency<sup>24</sup>. Multi-level initiative (local policy strategies, financial strategies and legislative strategies).</p> <p>Sareb [Company for the Management of Assets proceeding from Restructuring of the Banking System] signed an agreement on 16 December 2015 with Barcelona City Council for temporary return of 255 housing units to be used to address urgent housing requirements.</p> <p>Barcelona's Council will be responsible over an eight-year period for managing the returned properties. The agreement involves return of vacant housing and illegally occupied housing (the latter being no more than 50% of the total). The SAREB is expected to make all the apartments available to the City Council during the first half of 2016. Barcelona City Council will have to pay SAREB €75 per month for housing units that are already occupied and €125 per month for the vacant units.</p>
<p><b>Aim of the measure</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legalisation of 'reclaiming' empty housing units following waves of evictions.</li> <li>• Social rentals at affordable prices.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Number of properties returned to use</b></p>	<p>In Barcelona, 255 housing units have been handed over by SAREB to date. In March 2016, 50 more apartments were handed over by CaixaBank (a large Spanish bank). Plans are ongoing to bring this figure up to 455 in the near future.</p>
<p><b>Background</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Spain, banks hold more than 80% of the vacant housing. When the property bubble burst, thousands of households were unable to repay their mortgages. Having evicted the people living in these homes, the banks became the property's owner. Vulture funds then saw an opportunity to buy these property assets at very low prices: between 2012 and 2013, SAREB and the Madrid regional government sold, for example, thousands of social housing units to investment funds run by Goldman Sachs and Blackstone among others.</li> <li>• Obra Social, the activist branch of the PAH [Platform for People Affected by Mortgages] proceeded to recuperate vacant housing held by banks: following the 2007 crisis, several million euros were transferred by the Spanish government to banks as part of the financial bailout. From that point, Obra Social regard this public money, taken from local taxes, as having mainly contributed to paying for housing seized by the banks. This housing belongs to the public space, in their opinion, and should be returned to residents who are most in need. Launched in October 2015, the <i>La Sareb es nuestra</i> campaign unveiled a map of the country in which 30,000 vacant housing units held by the SAREB were pinpointed. At the point when this action was launched, 18 buildings had already been 'recuperated': the aim was to call for the recuperation of all the vacant housing. During the occupation, Obra Social supported the occupants in negotiations with the bank for transforming the property into social housing. Of 40 buildings seized by activists (18 of which belonged to SAREB), two of them have become social housing buildings (i.e. 57 apartments).</li> <li>• Agreement with SAREB to transfer 600 units of their stock to the regional government: the first agreement was signed with the <i>Generalitat de Catalunya</i> [Catalan government] in June 2014 and was extended in June 2015 to 300 other housing units.</li> <li>• According to a report published in 2015, Barcelona City Council calculated that SAREB held 644 housing units in Barcelona, of which 325 are uninhabited. More broadly, banks possess 2,591 vacant housing units in Barcelona.</li> </ul>

<sup>24</sup> Legal entity specifically created to enable financial institutions to transfer their toxic assets and whose aim it is to resell the assets in the best possible market conditions

<p><b>Political and institutional context</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiative and management of the strategy by the City Council: during the May 2015 elections, several capitals of autonomous communities elected radical left-wing parties that originate from citizens' movements of ordinary people uniting. Barcelona thus elected representatives of the citizen platform 'Barcelona en Comú' [Barcelona in Common], with the new team in council headed up by Ada Colau, who was one of the founders and a spokesperson for the PAH. The current City Council of Barcelona is therefore made up of activists for the right to housing and the PAH.</li> <li>• Significant legislative advances regarding real estate vacancy in Catalonia:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_The Law on the Right to Housing (18/2007) ensures that policies must be put in place to bring vacant properties to the market (Art. 42).</li> <li>_The Regional Government Law on vacant property that seeks to impose fines on companies that have been holding unused property for more than two years.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Several legal battles have been fought against property repossessions, some of which were taken as far as the UN's Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (I.D.G v. Spain, Communication 2/2014).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Initial property type</b></p>	<p>Private residential real estate vacancy, property of banks (SAREB, CaixaBank, BBVA, etc.).</p>
<p><b>Local market factors</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tight market that experienced a significant fall after the 2008 crisis. Property prices in Spain lost on average 30% of their value between 2008 and 2013 (and up to 50% in some regions). The banks have several thousand housing units in their possession; BBVA, CaixaBank and Sabadell sold more than 53,000 of them in 2014, an increase of 50% on 2013. However, at the end of 2013, Spain had 570,000 brand new empty housing units. That same year, 28% of housing was vacant or used as a secondary residence in Spain.</li> <li>• The stock of social housing is minimal in Spain due to an over-riding culture of property ownership. 82.2% of Spanish households are owners while 12.1% are renting (the rental market being almost completely private).</li> <li>• Evictions: between 2007 and the third quarter of 2012, 416,975 property repossessions were carried out.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Viability/financial accessibility</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective accessibility: the amount that renters will have to pay is based on their income, to ensure that the cost of rent plus essentials does not require more than 30% of their current net income. The housing will be provided to renters in a decent and habitable state, and if investment is necessary for renovation, the costs will be divided equally between SAREB and the City Council.</li> <li>• Relative viability: management for 8 years.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Extent of autonomy and empowerment</b></p>	<p>Prior to all this, it was the social movement PAH, led by those who had been evicted and those who occupied properties illegally, that was behind getting this problem on the agenda. This came to fruition with the municipal elections that brought stakeholders of the citizens' movement to City Council, thereby putting them in a powerful position for negotiating rental of vacant properties with banks.</p>
<p><b>Reflections: reviews/transferability</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SAREB doubled the number of social housing units returned on a temporary basis both to the autonomous communities (Catalonia) and to big City Councils (Barcelona), with a total of 4,000 housing units at the beginning of 2016. Seven other agreements were signed between SAREB and the autonomous communities (Aragon, the Balearics, the Basque, the Canary Islands, Galicia and Castile and León). At the beginning of 2016, more than 6,000 people benefitted from these affordable rented accommodation plans signed with SAREB.</li> <li>• The fight continues for the PAH, which in March 2016 noted that while the Council's efforts are welcome, it was necessary to keep the momentum going as there were still 2,500 empty apartments in Barcelona while families had no homes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>For more information</b></p>	<p>Website of SAREB: <a href="https://www.sareb.es/en-en/">https://www.sareb.es/en-en/</a></p>

# ASSET MANAGEMENT AGENCIES AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE AFFORDABLE HOUSING

## IRELAND | NAMA | DIVERSE MARKET

<b>Type of measure</b>	Partnership between the public authorities and a 'bad bank' or national asset management agency <sup>25</sup> .
<b>Implementation period:</b> <i>2015-ongoing</i>	NAMA (The National Asset Management Agency), created in 2009 by the Irish government to deal with the banking crisis, in addition to its principal aim of absorbing many toxic bank assets, is also responsible for managing its assets in accordance with the government's objectives which include taking social initiatives. NAMA is therefore committed to making some of its property assets available for the provision of social housing. The process works as follows: NAMA first identifies property units that could potentially be adapted to social housing. Local authorities are then responsible for confirming the active demand for social housing. If demand is confirmed, NAMA mediates between the debtor/recipient and the entity wishing to acquire the property: this could be a local authority or an accredited not-for-profit housing body.
<b>Aim of the measure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase the stock of social housing.</li> <li>- Create a win-win solution for asset management agencies and affordable housing social policies.</li> </ul>
<b>Number of properties returned to use</b>	In October 2015, NAMA identified 6,575 housing units for potential use as social housing. Local authorities confirmed demand for 2,526 of these units. 1,600 units have been provided for social housing purposes.
<b>Background</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between 2002 and 2008, the number of vacant housing units in Ireland increased by 150%. The Irish property bubble was one of biggest in Europe with 3000 'ghost estates' counted in 2010, a result of the Celtic Tiger's era of over-construction. The property crisis combined with austerity measures hit the poorest households hardest: between 2008 and 2013, Ireland's price-to-income ratio for poor households saw one of the largest jumps in Europe (+8 points).</li> <li>• According to the CSO's (Central Statistics Office) 2011 census, Ireland had: 168,427 vacant houses; 61,629 vacant apartments; 59,395 secondary residences; for a total stock of 1,994,845 residential units. This amounts to a national vacancy rate (including secondary residences) of 14.5%. 16,321 vacant apartments are located in Dublin.</li> <li>• In September 2015, 2,612 public housing units owned by local authorities were vacant.</li> </ul>
<b>Political and institutional context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government wanted to increase the stock of social housing and to intervene in the management of large stocks of property assets.</li> <li>• Desire to provide a 'social dividend' in order to counterbalance the negative effects on social rights and the right to housing that are caused by traditional re-sale of property assets to the highest-bidding investment fund.</li> </ul>
<b>Initial property type</b>	Private residential real estate vacancy, owned by banks.

<sup>25</sup> Legal entity specifically created to enable financial institutions to transfer their toxic assets and whose aim it is to resell the assets in the best possible market conditions

<p><b>Local market factors</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Property prices currently high in areas where the market is tight.</li> <li>• Large number of vacant properties ('ghost estates') in peripheral areas with little economic activity.</li> <li>• Culturally, the tradition is of owning property: in the 2000s, 10% of the Irish population were renters whereas today that number stands at 20%. There are 140,000 people on the waiting list for social housing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Viability/financial accessibility</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NAMA created a special fund called NARPS (National Asset Residential Property Services Limited), in order to speed up the acquisition of properties where there is demand so that they can be rented over the long term to local authorities/accredited housing bodies for social housing purposes.</li> <li>• Partnerships between NAMA/local authorities/not-for-profit organisations (e.g. Focus Ireland, an organisation offering services to homeless people)/(developers):the partners ensure that the housing is provided for poor people needing accommodation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Extent of autonomy and empowerment</b></p>	<p>None.</p>
<p><b>Reflections: reviews/transferability</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There has been some criticism regarding overvaluation of potential stock that NAMA can make available: this stock only represents 2% of vacant housing at national level, i.e. a part of it was located in areas that do not have significant housing needs and where employment opportunities are poor.</li> <li>• Some difficulties were experienced by the accredited housing bodies in the acquisition process (the complexity of implementation within the partnerships, long delays of between 18 months and 3 years in acquisition, etc.)</li> <li>• Significant transferability potential given the various asset management agencies that exist in those countries most negatively affected by austerity measures and the worrying situation of housing exclusion and lack of affordable housing in these same countries (e.g. Italy, Greece).</li> </ul>
<p><b>For more information</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- FEANTSA, <i>Turning Toxic Assets into Social Housing: A Win-Win for Asset Management Companies in the EU?</i>, December 2015.</li> <li>- Webpage of NAMA's social initiatives: <a href="https://www.nama.ie/social-initiatives/social-housing/">https://www.nama.ie/social-initiatives/social-housing/</a></li> </ul>

# AMBITIOUS COERCIVE SOLUTIONS: TAXES AND LEGISLATION

## FRANCE | VACANCY TAX | DIVERSE MARKET

<p><b>Type of measure</b></p> <p><b>Implementation period:</b> <i>1998-ongoing</i></p>	<p>Fiscal measure, intended to be restrictive but is more incentivising in effect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 29 July 1998 (Law no. 98-657): The TLV [tax on vacant housing], is a 1999 implementation order concerning towns with more than 200,000 inhabitants where there is a significant imbalance between available housing stock and the demand from people on low incomes. The tax relates to housing that has been vacant for more than two years and is empty. A unit is not considered vacant if it has been inhabited for more than 30 consecutive days over the previous two years. The law specifies that the tax does not have to be paid for secondary residences or when 'the vacancy is not voluntary' (if the asset is already on the market; or if renovation costs to make the housing habitable is more than 25% of its value on the market). Tax: 10% of the rental value<sup>26</sup> the first year, 12.5% the second year, and 15% from the third year onwards. The amount is transferred to ANAH [France's National Housing Agency], which is responsible for giving grants to owners who carry out renovations for the purpose of putting their property back on the rental market.</li> <li>• The TLV was subsequently amended by the 13 July 2006 law 'National commitment to housing' (law no. 2006-872) which gave communes that do not meet the criteria for the TLV the possibility of establishing a THLV (habitation tax on vacant housing). It strengthened the preceding strategy, involves housing that has been vacant for at least two years and the tax rates are the same. 3,000 municipalities chose to implement this. Since 2012, the EPCIs [Public Establishment for Intercommunal Co-operation] with own-source tax revenue can establish the THLV in their territories if the communes themselves have not already introduced this tax. The 2013 law also increase the tax rates to 12.5% of the rental value for the first year of vacancy and to 25% of the rental value for subsequent years.</li> <li>• Following a decree of 10 May 2013, further to the 2013 finance law, the geographic scope of intervention for the TLV was enlarged. It is now applicable in any urban territory with more than 50,000 inhabitants and involves housing that has been vacant for at least one year. In effect, this extends application of the TLV to 28 zones (as opposed to 8) and 1,151 communes (as opposed to 811).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Aim of the measure</b></p>	<p>Increase the supply of affordable housing by fighting vacancy and mobilising private stock.</p>
<p><b>Number of properties returned to use</b></p>	<p>See 'Reflections' for results.</p>
<p><b>Background</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As in most countries, between 2000 and 2007, the market price of housing increased faster than inflation in France. However, in 2008 and unlike several European countries and the United States, prices continued to increase in France.</li> <li>• Increase in housing exclusion, in the number of homeless people, in the number of poor households facing an excessively high price-to-income ratio with regard to housing costs (more than 40% of their income).</li> <li>• In 2013 in France, vacant housing and secondary residences accounted for 17% of the total.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Political and institutional context</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refocusing and intensifying the terms of the tax under the mandate of Cécile Duflot, elected for the Green Party and Minister for Housing from May 2012 to March 2014. For example, she proposed incentivising owners to rent their vacant housing to AIVSs (social rental agencies).</li> <li>• In 2009, a parliamentary bill for a housing vacancy management policy was rejected by the French Senate.</li> <li>• In theory, there are three measures for seizing vacant property in France but they are very rarely applied.</li> </ul>

<sup>26</sup> Note that the rental value, according to article 1409 of France's General Tax Code, is always estimated based on land registry values that date back to the 1970s.

<p><b>Initial property type</b></p>	<p>The tax is only applicable to private owners.</p>
<p><b>Reflections: reviews/transferability</b></p>	<p>TLV: mixed results: 570,000 housing units were identified in the relevant towns as being subject to the tax but only 187,500 met the criteria for the law. 180,000 households paid the tax in 1999 and 96,837 paid it in 2007. According to ANAH, in effect, vacancy decreased more in the urban areas affected by the tax than in the rest of the country (particularly long-term vacancy of over two years): between 1999 and 2005, the vacancy rate fell by between 12.5% and 48% for the eight urban areas affected while it only fell by 8.5% in France as a whole. Despite some criticism on the return from this fiscal tool, the TLV seems to have had an effect on vacancy and this is the reason it was strengthened and broadened twice.</p>
<p><b>For more information</b></p>	<p>Félix Blossier's thesis, '<i>Is taxing inhabitation effective? Evidence from the French tax scheme on vacant housing</i>', 2012 &lt; <a href="http://master.sciences-po.fr/sites/default/files/Felix_Blossier_Memoire.pdf">http://master.sciences-po.fr/sites/default/files/Felix_Blossier_Memoire.pdf</a>&gt;</p>

# AMBITIOUS COERCIVE SOLUTIONS: TAXES AND LEGISLATION

## BELGIUM | CHARLEROI | RÉQUISITION DOUCE AND HOUSING OFFICERS | SLACK RESIDENTIAL MARKET

<p><b>Type of measure</b></p> <p><b>Implementation period:</b> 2010-ongoing</p>	<p>Restrictive legislative and local policy measure, led by CPAS Charleroi, whose aim is to ensure application of articles 80 and 85 of the Wallonia Housing Code and of <i>Habitat Durable</i> [Sustainable Habitat].</p> <p>Réquisition douce [gentle requisition] in Charleroi is presented as a process of support, information giving and positive collaboration with private owners to encourage them to return housing that has been vacant more than 12 months to occupancy. On verifying the application conditions (there must have been no entry on the population register at the address identified for at least 12 months), owners are subjected to 'gentle requisition' to convince them to return their properties to the active housing stock (through letters, meetings, discussions). It is a restrictive and coercive measure as, theoretically, if an owner refuses to return their vacant asset to the market, a 'forced requisition' can be issued by the Justice of the Peace.</p> <p>The role of Capteur-Logement [Housing Officer] was also created by the <i>Relais Social</i> [social action centre] in Charleroi at the end of 2012: his or her role is to source decent private housing accessible to people on low incomes and to be the housing contact for the renter, the owner and the social workers throughout the duration of the occupancy.</p>
<p><b>Aim of the measure</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Return assets to the rental market.</li> <li>• Renovate the building.</li> <li>• Make a section of the vacant private rental market accessible to people experiencing difficulty finding housing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Number of properties returned to use</b></p>	<p>For 2014-2015:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of 618 properties targeted by 'gentle requisition', 68% are being returned to the market for the short to medium term ( from one month to five years) with active owners; 120 assets are on sale/sold, 132 assets are rented/occupied, 157 are undergoing works, 12 are involved in an ongoing building project.</li> <li>• 12% are being returned to the market in the medium term (from one to five years), with active owners but with difficulties (supported by the CPAS housing unit).</li> <li>• 13% are dependent on a future, uncertain event in order to be returned to the property market, with owners who are active but currently excused.</li> <li>• 7% have uncooperative owners and their return to the housing market is uncertain.</li> </ul> <p>93% of the owners of vacant properties targeted by 'gentle requisition' are therefore active.</p>
<p><b>Background</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 1993, the federal law known as 'Onkelinx' gave mayors the possibility to use a requisition right on housing that has been vacant for more than 6 months in order to make them available to homeless people, in return for fair compensation. However, a number of application difficulties have jeopardised its effectiveness (the commune only has recourse to requisition if it does not itself possess empty building that could be transformed into housing without major renovations; also, a building cannot be considered vacant if the owner has made an application for a building permit). Following the ineffectiveness of this measure, the three Belgian regions adopted a mechanism similar to 'gentle requisition' that also include a negotiation phase with the owner. In Belgium, this is called 'the public management right'. This right is extended to a multitude of property operators (communes, provinces, social housing agencies, CPAS [Public Centre for Social Assistance], housing fund for large families etc.), and the beneficiaries of requisitioned housing are no longer only those suffering housing exclusion: the decree entails income ceilings to households benefiting from the scheme.</li> <li>• In Belgium, there is also a tax on unoccupied buildings. In 2013, while 1,078 housing units are listed as vacant, only 20% to 25% of them are actually taxed in Charleroi. It is through the Taxation Service that CPAS gets a list of those assets being taxed for vacancy, and can thus proceed to the different stages of the 'gentle requisition' process.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Political and institutional context</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The liaison group of the 'gentle requisition' project in Charleroi includes:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Charleroi CPAS, the housing unit of this organisation coordinates the project</li> <li>- Representatives of various services in the City (Taxes, public registry/population, housing, city planning, Maison du Logement [House of Housing], administrative police)</li> <li>- Representatives of the Mayor's office</li> <li>- Police representatives (neighbourhood police officers)</li> <li>- Social housing agencies</li> <li>- Associations that promote housing issues</li> <li>- FLFNW (Wallonia's housing fund for large families)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Initial property type</b></p>	<p>Private residential real estate vacancy.</p>
<p><b>Local market factors</b></p>	<p>Historically a significant industrial centre, the city of Charleroi has experienced a period of urban decline leading to abandonment (note that in 2008, the city started a process of 'transition'). 90% of the rental property stock in Charleroi is private and 10% is public. The region of Charleroi is one of Belgium's least expensive areas in terms of property. According to a 2015 pilot study (based on analysis of energy consumption, so carries potential for overestimation), it is reported that there are 10,853 potentially vacant housing units in Charleroi, which means a vacancy rate of 11%.</p>
<p><b>Reflections: reviews/transferability</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Forced requisition' via the Justice of the Peace could be applied to 5% to 10% of property owners. However, this route is not favoured because case law in the matter is practically non-existent and it is not in CPAS's interest that such case law builds to its disadvantage. Furthermore, it represents a non-negligible cost. The emphasis is therefore on voluntary motivation of owners, and this has thus far been successful in terms of the number of vacant housing that has been returned to use.</li> <li>• Requisition procedures exist elsewhere in Europe (in France, for example, although the legislative measures have only recently been called upon by the government to address the emergency housing needs of refugees).</li> </ul>
<p><b>For more information</b></p>	<p>Presentation of <i>Réquisition Douce</i> 2014-2015 by CPAS Charleroi: <a href="http://www.charleroi.be/sites/default/files/kcfinder/files/conseil2015/15-06-01/09.pdf">http://www.charleroi.be/sites/default/files/kcfinder/files/conseil2015/15-06-01/09.pdf</a></p>

For more information, contact [chloe.serme-morin@feantsa.org](mailto:chloe.serme-morin@feantsa.org)



ACCESS TO DIGNIFIED AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN EUROPE: CASE STUDIES AND INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS