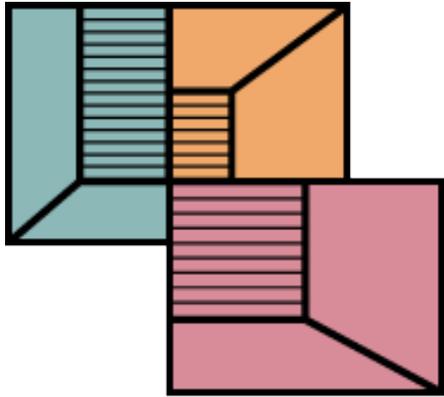




ROOF
Ending homelessness



URBACT
Driving change for
better cities



affordable housing

Social and Affordable Housing and Combating Housing Exclusion and Homelessness in Thessaloniki

Draft Integrated Action Plan

April 2022,

Municipality of Thessaloniki and Major Development Agency of Thessaloniki



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1. General Description

1.1 Thessaloniki Metropolitan Area

The Greater Thessaloniki Area, spanning 112 km², is situated in the South-East Europe. Thessaloniki is the seat of the Region of Central Macedonia with more than half of the region's population. The city sprawls around an arc of coastline at the top of the Thermaic Gulf. A major spatial characteristic of the city's metropolitan area is the extent and multifunctional coastal line connecting the various urban activities, most of them of regional and national importance, such as the Axios River Delta, the Thessaloniki Port and the SKG Airport.

Thessaloniki is the second-largest city in Greece. Nowadays, the population of the urban agglomeration of Thessaloniki is 0,8 million people; according to demographic prognosis in a typical scenario, the community may face population decline and ageing population by 2050. Thessaloniki gathers 39% of the inhabitants of the urban agglomeration. The six remaining municipalities collect the 61%, with an average of 85.000 inhabitants per municipality.

Today, Thessaloniki is a lively, multicultural city that attracts young people, tourists, and international business. The city still focuses on recovering from the global economic depression as well as ongoing environmental changes.

The Official Master Plan of Thessaloniki (Law 1561/1985 FEK 148/A'/6.9.1985) has defined what it is called the Urban Agglomeration of Thessaloniki. This area covers part of the County of Thessaloniki, and consists of three main zones:

- The metropolitan centre;
- The urban agglomeration of Thessaloniki, which includes the 7 municipalities: Municipality of Thessaloniki, Municipality of Evosmos – Kordelio, Municipality of Neapolis–Sykes, Municipality of Pavlos Melas, Municipality of Ampelokipi–Menemeni, Municipality of Kalamaria and Part of Municipality of Pylea–Chortiatis;
- The peri-urban zone, which includes 4 more municipalities.



2. Contextual Analysis and Policy Challenges

2.1 Housing in Greece and Thessaloniki¹

Housing in Greece has been dealt with primarily as an individual matter with sporadic and defunct interventions in the field of social housing. Currently, Greece has 0% social housing stock, an exception among all EU countries. The exceptional management of housing issues during the late post-war era, via the land-for-flats system (*antiparochi*), the fragmented and widespread small landownership and the high ratio of owner-occupied dwellings reflected in the institutional and public indifference to housing and guaranteeing access to housing.

Nevertheless, under the current radical circumstances the discussion on housing has resurfaced in an imperative manner. During the financial crisis, the market trends were negative (e.g., price falls and a decline in construction activity), while on a social level housing deprivation was generalized, affecting a considerable part of the population (income reduction, tax increases, a surge in non-performing loans, increasing energy poverty). At the same time, the policy and management response to what has become known as the “refugee crisis” drove a significant number of people to housing precariousness and deprivation. Lately, the considerable growth of the real estate market, marked by an increase in investment interest, the expansion of the short-term (tourist) rental sector, the revitalization of construction activity etc., altogether contributed to the rise of housing prices and the ensuing escalation of housing exclusion which had initially appeared at the beginning of the financial crisis.

Over the previous decade, the eruption of the financial crisis, structural readjustments delivering austerity, institutional reforms, as well as a resurgence of interest in investment together with other factors, such as the inadequate responses to the increased migration and refugee flows that touched off in 2015, significantly modified the local housing market and its related needs. According to the annual Survey on Income and Living Conditions of the Household (EU-SILC) conducted by the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT), annual household income fell by €5,564 or 37.6% between 2010 and 2016, and despite the recent economic recovery, it remains low. The reduction of income led to a dramatic increase in the percentage of the population facing the **risk of poverty** which peaked at a quarter of the population in

¹ The information contained in this section is from: P. Hatziprokopiou, M. Karagianni, M. Kapsali, (2021) Social and Affordable Housing in Thessaloniki. Extended Summary Report, ATh, Major Development Agency of Thessaloniki S.A, April 2021.



2012-13 and remained as high as 18% in 2019 (almost 700,000 households, more than 1,880,000 people). In the Region of Central Macedonia this percentage is approximately 2.5% higher compared to the rest of the country. Moreover, there are clear distinctions between different categories of households and population, reflecting the inequality between their characteristics and potential: for example, this number includes 22.7% of the population that has not finished secondary education, 37% of the single parent families, 45% of unemployed, 57% of nationals of non-EU countries aged 18-64 years old.

Focusing on the variants concerning housing conditions, the same survey reveals the fact that households paying rent (13.2% of the total) are more exposed to the risk of poverty compared to owner-occupied households and in addition to that they **are deprived of basic housing amenities**. Furthermore, the percentage of the population living in **overcrowded spaces** has slightly but steadily increased over the previous period and now affects 28.7% of the population, while it is particularly high among the poor population (45.7%).

According to data derived from the Population Census conducted by ELSTAT, over the past three decades the population of the Metropolitan Area of Thessaloniki has been redistributed along the lines of two basic trends: **the shrinking of the densely populated core of the urban fabric and suburbanization and urban sprawl**. Despite the population increase of the urban area of Thessaloniki, the percentage it makes up of the overall population of the Metropolitan Area is declining, mainly due to a population decrease in the Central Municipality. The Central Municipality's share of the total population of the Metropolitan Area decreased from half in 1991 to less than a third by 2011. Suburbanization and urban expansion were accompanied by a geographical diffusion of economic activities combined with the emergence of new areas of mass consumption and recreation in both the northwest and the southeast part of the city, though without a shrinking of the economic activity in the urban area complex or the historical center of Thessaloniki.

During the past five years, the revival of the housing market led to sharp price increases, especially in the Municipality of Thessaloniki. According to data published by the real estate website spitogatos.gr, the price index of housing for sale dropped by 42.5% from 2011 to 2016 and has increased by the same rate since then. Also, from 2018 and on prices, in the Municipality of Thessaloniki in particular, increased rapidly, exceeding the prices of the adjacent municipalities. It is indicative to note that the average sales price per m² during the first quarter of 2020 rose by 28% compared to the same period in 2019.

If we combine this data, we can calculate the percentage that housing costs make up of the total available income and consequently examine the burden it places on it. Almost 37% of the households in the region are overburdened by the housing costs



and for 60% of them housing costs exceed half of their income. One in three households who own a residence and do not owe a mortgage are overburdened by their housing costs, while the same applies for 38.6% of those with an outstanding mortgage and a tragically high 80% of households paying rent. As could be expected **half of the households in the region declare that the total housing cost constitutes a “considerable burden” on their income**, while one in four households found it difficult to pay the bills last year, almost 8% had difficulties paying rent or mortgage installments and 14.5% declared they didn't have the financial means for sufficient heating during winter. It is notable that a majority (56%) of households estimate that the monthly minimum net income required to be able to meet all its needs considerably exceeds its actual available income (requiring €363 more).

The target group of the Social and Affordable Housing policies at a local level are priority individuals and households, living permanently or temporarily in Thessaloniki, who lack an owned-residence, and are living under **precarious conditions**:

- **in terms of income**, that is either they lack a stable source of income or any income at all, or have low income or are about to have a source of income within a reasonable period of time
- **and/or in terms of housing**, meaning that they are either accommodated in an inadequate and/or temporary residence (i.e. living in shelters, as temporary guests etc.) or are eligible to exit from social care facilities (such as rehabilitation facilities, mental health units)

In the aforementioned categories we can identify the main target groups:

- Low-income households lacking a self-owned residence
- Students whose permanent residence is outside Thessaloniki
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Homeless people

Despite the continuity and the overall functioning of the urban space in the Metropolitan Area, not all Municipalities face the same problems nor do they have the same priorities. The Municipality of Thessaloniki for instance holds the largest part of the population facing housing difficulties, while at the same time it is often subjected to intense pressure when it comes to increases in property prices due to limited availability, congestion of commercial and touristic business and high demand. In addition to that, the Municipality has recently developed the largest housing programme for homeless people and refugees.

In order to estimate the size of the population with (very) low income in the metropolitan area, data concerning the recipients (applications – households) and beneficiaries (household members – population) who are eligible for basic welfare benefits have been examined: the Guaranteed Minimum Income Benefit (former Social Security Allowance/SSA) as well as the Housing Benefit.



The Guaranteed Minimum Income Benefit is a social welfare programme providing income support, supplementary social services, and empowerment services (i.e., assistance for the beneficiaries with the goal of supporting them professionally). The *beneficiaries* of this programme are either “single-member” or “multi-member” households (guests or families are considered to be members of the latter category, as well as adult descendants in education up to 25 years old, regardless of their place of residence), and also “homeless people”. There are certain income and property *eligibility criteria* (based on calculations of movable and immovable assets), while the declared income may not exceed €5,400 independent of the number of household members.

Regarding the Guaranteed Minimum Income Benefit, it is estimated that in April 2020, in the metropolitan area in total, 18,845 households received this allowance, and the respective total family members being more than 33,600. Their distribution in the Metropolitan Area does not correspond to the distribution of the population, although it mirrors the city’s social geography. More than a third are accommodated in the Municipality of Thessaloniki and almost 50% in the northwest Municipalities of the TUA. The majority of them (55.3%) are single-member households, while there is a strong presence of single-parent families. More than a third of the beneficiaries belong to the 36-55 age group and half of them live in self-owned dwellings. There is a considerable number of people residing in social housing schemes (12.7%), especially in the Municipality of Delta (41%). The vast majority (68.6%) have zero income, with this percentage being more than 70% in the Municipality of Thessaloniki and Delta.

The Housing Benefit is a rental support welfare programme aiming to help households who live in rented primary residences. The “eligible units” are “single-member” (adults living alone and not students) and “multi-member” households (guests or families are considered to be members of the latter category, as well as adult descendants in education up to 25 years old, regardless of their place of residence), and people to whom housing has been granted for free or they rent a part of the primary residence. There are certain income and property *eligibility criteria* (movable and immovable assets) as well as accommodation criteria. The total income may not exceed the amount of €7,000 for single-member households, plus €3,500 per additional member (€7,000 for the first minor member of single-parent families, and the same amount for each disadvantaged minor member), while it cannot exceed €21,000 annually, independently of the household composition.

Specifically regarding the households accommodated in a rented residence, 32,840 of them receive the **Housing Allowance** in the metropolitan area: almost 38% are single-member households, 34.5% are households of two or three members and 27.5% are households of four or more members. Single-member households are overrepresented in the Municipality of Thessaloniki (more than half of the beneficiaries), while there are lower percentages (17.5 - 18.5%) in the neighbouring



Municipalities. The income of the vast majority amounts to €5-10,000, while lower incomes (€0-5,000) in total, are especially concentrated in the Municipality of Thessaloniki (37.2%).

Almost one in five Housing Allowance beneficiaries also receives the GMIB. In terms of population, *low-income households currently (in 2020) accommodated in a rented apartment* receiving the allowance represent a third (almost 102,500) of the households accommodated in rented apartments during the Census conducted in 2011: 28% in the Municipality of Thessaloniki, and with this percentage making up almost a half of the rented apartments in the Municipalities of Delta, Pavlos Melas, Ampelokipoi-Menemeni and Kordelio-Evosmos.

According to the Census conducted in 2011, there were approximately 70,000 “foreigners”, i.e., citizens of non-Greek nationality, residing in the metropolitan area. More than three quarters of them were accommodated in rented dwellings and represented one quarter of the tenants in the region. More than a third resided in the Municipality of Thessaloniki, while there was a concentration of population in the Municipalities of Delta, Thermaikos and Ampelokipoi-Menemeni. During the second half of the past decade, migration patterns in Greece have been significantly changed as a result of the refugee crisis and consequently there has been a more significant presence of asylum seekers and refugees. Almost a tenth of the asylum applications countrywide have been submitted at the Regional Asylum Office of Thessaloniki (7,387). In total, from 2015 to 2019, almost 35,000 asylum applications were submitted in the Thessaloniki office.

In short, the refugee population of the area in question is accommodated in:

- **Four accommodation facilities** in the Metropolitan Area of Thessaloniki (Diavata, Lagadikia, Vagiochori, Volvi), where 3,000 people were accommodated as of October 2020 (23-30% women, 40-50% children, 715 households).
- **Rented apartments under the ESTIA accommodation scheme**, where 3,880 people were accommodated (i.e., 1,360 households) in March 2020.
- **Housing facilities under the HELIOS project**, implemented by the International Organization for Migration, where in April 2020, 224 recognized refugees (131 families) were accommodated. If these numbers remain consistent, it is estimated that by mid-October 2020, they will have quadrupled due to the expansion of the project in question.
- Almost 720 unaccompanied minors are accommodated **outside refugee camps**, in accordance with data provided by the National Centre of Social Solidarity, by mid-October 2020.
- An indefinite number of asylum seekers are accommodated in **hotels** situated in the Metropolitan Area of Thessaloniki, rented by the IOM.



- **Rented dwellings without any financial assistance:** Based on on-the-spot research, it is estimated that 592 people (482 households), asylum seekers and refugees, rented apartments during the summer of 2018. Today, these figures might have increased.
- **Temporarily abandoned places** such as empty warehouses, abandoned railway wagons etc. at the old Railway Station in the west of the city. According to data published by the responsible authorities the estimated number of homeless people in autumn 2020 was 700.

In 2018, during the pilot census of homeless people conducted by the Ministry of Labour, 380 people were registered in the Municipality of Thessaloniki, of which the following categories replied to a questionnaire: 126 residing in accommodation facilities, 83 in supported apartments, 100 living on the street, while there were a further 71 who were found to be living on the street but did not reply to the questionnaire. Those living on the street were mainly men, of Greek nationality, 18-64 years old, who had previously lived in a rented apartment and ended up living on the street due to economic difficulties. For half of them it was their first time living on the street. In April 2020, among the beneficiaries of the GMIB, 589 were homeless people (1.7% of the total number). In 2019 there were 734 and in 2018 there were 773. Almost half of those recipients in 2020 (264) live in the Municipality of Thessaloniki, while a considerable percentage lives in the Municipality of Delta (16%) and in the Municipality of Pavlos Melas (15%).

According to data derived from the Census of 2011, out of 508,000 registered residences, 123,355, i.e., 24% were registered as vacant. Just less than half (47%) of the total vacant houses in the study area are located in the Municipality of Thessaloniki, which is the Municipality with the largest proportion of vacant residences, with 28.3% of the residences being vacant. The two main categories of vacant dwellings are the following: (1) dwellings which are temporarily vacant with a view to being rented or sold and (2) those which have been vacant for a long time or permanently because they are either used as holiday house or as a secondary residence.

2.2 Homelessness in Thessaloniki

Homelessness is an increasing problem in the city, with 380 individuals registered by the pilot Ministry of Labour Survey that was conducted in 2018 in a street situation. However, there have been points in time, especially during the peak of the refugee crisis between 2018- 2019, when estimations of the number of persons in a street situation, primarily influenced by the lack of accommodation opportunities and legal status (undocumented) of migrants and refugees have surpassed 600 in total in the



city. According to NGOs carrying out street work in the city, the homeless population ranges from 65² to 89.³

The city has one functioning homeless shelter which has a capacity of accommodating a maximum number of 70 individuals between 19:00 until 9:00 in the morning for a maximum period of six months. The services provided in the shelter include overnight stay, personal hygiene, laundry, provision of clothing, at least one meal per day, basic medical services, psycho-social services and referrals to specialised services. To access the shelter individuals have to have basic medical checks and reports as well as not be in a situation of drug-use. The Municipality of Thessaloniki runs a homeless day center in collaboration with non-state actors. The service provision capacity of the day center per day cannot exceed 50 individuals as described in the operational guidelines.⁴

In addition, there are non-state actors who provide day services to homeless as well as basic goods and support, including for undocumented individuals. There is uneven access of homeless persons in a street situation according to the Ministry pilot study of 2018. According to the study, only 20% receive minimum guaranteed income and 25,9% have income other than employment, primarily through various welfare benefits.

The National Strategy on Homelessness in place since 2018 has the objective to prevent and intervene to combat housing issues. The aim of the strategy is to ensure safe and affordable housing for all residents of the country.

² Streetwork conducted by ARSIS and the Municipal Police.

³ Streetwork conducted by Doctors without Borders.

⁴ Decision No. 604/24-04-2017



3. URBACT Local Group

3.1 Members and Stakeholders

The URBACT Local Group brings together approximately 20 individuals representing different levels of governance:

Public actors

Municipalities of the Metropolitan Area
Municipal social services
Municipal Police
Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Ministry of Environment and Energy

Expert Stakeholders

Researchers
Academics, related university departments
Project staff in related programmes

Social Actors

NGOs working on homelessness, social inclusion, refugees and migrants
informal networks and activists

3.2 Processes and Tools

The ULG members meet regularly on average every other month with varying intensity of meetings analogous to the needs of both the ROOF programme and the housing interventions already ongoing at the city level. In addition, ad hoc and specialised meetings take place according to the thematic focus and needs such as meetings that have been taking place with a focus on Housing First as well as meetings that took place in order in Thessaloniki.

Both planning of measures and those that have been already brought to the frontline for implementation have been designed and planned using a co-creation process, through workshops and bilateral meetings where it was deemed necessary.

COVID-19 and related measures have led to most workshops and meetings to be held online.



3.3 Engagement Strategy

The main methodology adopted by the process is marrying evidence based policy making through generating data which can feed into the bottom-up planning process with the participation of stakeholders.

The methodology bases itself on the integrated urban development principles defined as the following:

- Vertical integration: through engaging all governance levels
- Horizontal integration: through engaging multiple local public services and municipal services originating from a variety of policy areas
- Territorial Integration: planning for and in consideration of the metropolitan area of the city
- Mix between hard and soft investments: ensuring a balanced mix between hard investments (renovation) and social measures (soft investments)

The engagement of the core ULG members as well as wider contact persons and stakeholders that are engaged at an ad hoc basis ensures that the planning process can adequately integrate the principles at both the design and implementation stages.

In addition, the methodology of assemblages in engagement has been both effective in terms of time and resource management but has also allowed the core group of the ULG and the processes with which they are engaged to communicate and engage with other processes that have been set in force in the city. These include other networks such as the Urban Working Group (focused on refugee integration) as well as the MSF Urban Spaces Network engaging on issues of homelessness.



4. Strategic Approach

4.1 Vision of the Plan

The City of Thessaloniki's vision is to create conditions, facilitate interventions and policy processes in order to ensure that right to housing is guaranteed for populations residing in the metropolitan area of the city.

In order to make that a reality, Thessaloniki aims at promoting the social role of housing at the local but also at the national level, create affordable housing units across the city and ensure that through innovative interventions by 2040 functional zero in homelessness is achieved.

4.2 Goals and Focus of the Plan

Based on the results of the city-wide study which demonstrates both an increase of risk of housing exclusion for wider groups and hides homelessness as well as the lack of social and affordable housing stock as major barriers to effectively tackling homelessness and integration services, the Integrated Action Plan of the City of Thessaloniki will focus on the following four axes:

- a) Measures to ensure structural and institutional interventions in order to develop social and affordable housing stock in the city metropolitan area primarily through socialising private and public housing stock
- b) Increase the effectiveness of homelessness programmes through introducing and piloting Housing First linked to national homelessness programmes
- c) Ensure that the local housing strategy and housing services are upscaled in order to instigate necessary policy processes to ensure that right to housing is systematically considered
- d) Streamlining of national funds and programmes to respond to local housing strategies as well as the process of developing and implementing a national housing strategy.



5. Small-scale Action

5.1 Description of the SSA

In strong coordination with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the SSA has been designed to ensure upscaling of the first pilot Housing First initiative in Greece. The SSA therefore complements the National Homelessness programme and aims to pilot through supporting three beneficiaries with Housing First principles and drawing on the support provided by the National Programme. The SSA is implemented by two of the major organisations in Thessaloniki dealing with homelessness for decades and who have been partners of the Municipality of Thessaloniki in the implementation of the National Homelessness Programme. ARSIS and PRAKSIS are both active members of the ULG.

The main deliverables of the SSA include:

- Preparation of a Housing First implementation toolkit
- Identification of the beneficiaries
- Building a services network and referral system
- Providing Housing First Services
- Providing all information, deliverables and an evaluation of the action to the Ministry of Labour with a view to including a Housing First component in the next programming period for the National Homelessness programme

5.2 Implementation and timeline

The implementation of the SSA has started in February 2022 and will run until the mid of April 2022. The guide and toolkit has been completed in draft form in December 2021. The network of services is expected to commence their engagement by mid-January 2022 with a robust referral system that can service Housing First beneficiaries. The National Homelessness programme is expected to support the four (4) Housing First beneficiaries that the SSA will be piloting the action with for a period of up to 4 years after the end of the SSA support.

5.3 Evaluation of Results

The evaluation of the SSA itself based on the 'recruitment' of the four beneficiaries to the National Homelessness programme, satisfaction and life prospects survey to be conducted with beneficiaries of Housing First as well as the assessment of the referral system and network of services will be conducted prior to the finalisation of the Action Plan. A final evaluation ex-post will be conducted by the implementing



partners at the end of the support period provided by the National Homelessness programme.



6. Integrated Measures

Measure #1 – Housing Provision structures and Institutional Measures		
Current Situation		
<p>Given the absence of a national policy framework guiding housing provision, social housing or right to housing with the exception of now defunct housing provision mechanisms, there is no national nor local institutional framework that administers housing issues. The partial housing support provided through welfare benefits and complemented by inclusion and integration programmes while not constituting a holistic policy approach to housing also suffer from sustainability and do not alleviate the risk of housing exclusion due to inexistent social and affordable housing stock.</p>		
Goals of Measure		
<p>The main goal of this measure is to ensure that there is housing stock at the city level which can cater to the needs of vulnerable groups and ensure security of tenure and therefore combat risk of homelessness and housing exclusion and energy poverty. The horizontal principles guiding the measure will be supporting SDGs as well as specifically in the case of the housing stock, to ensure social mix in neighbourhoods, inclusive urban development as well as prioritising the support of the most vulnerable, including low-income and vulnerable landowners. An additional goal of the measure is to ensure that primary data is collected where necessary and secondary data is used effectively in order to garner a better understanding of housing exclusion and homelessness trends at city level as well as provide a viable evidence base for policy making and planning.</p>		
Proposed Actions		
<p>1. Inclusion of housing in the Municipal organigramme – appointment of housing issues to the portfolio of a relevant vice-mayor : ensure a constellation of services around households benefiting from affordable housing by: 1) appointing a housing focal point in each Municipal Community Center, 2) Identification of political representative to supervise the housing portfolio</p> <p>2. Set up a Social Rental Agency within the auspices of MDAT</p> <p>2.1 Recruitment of basic staff completed by mid 2022 with the following activities:</p>		
2022	2023	2024-2027
Finalisation of the business and operational plan (including codes of conduct and all related tools)	Update of the plans	Mid-term assessment and evaluation of implementation of the plans
Setting up of digital tools for housing stock	Management of private and public housing stock	Renovation of housing stock transferred to the



management and public outreach (www.housing.thessaloniki.gr)	allocation to the SRA	SRA	
Conduct tenancy rights trainings with vulnerable groups, including migrants and refugees, for tenancy rights (100 beneficiaries), Production of audio-visual material on right to housing: production of a series of podcasts	Tenancy rights trainings, energy efficiency trainings and related audiovisual material	Household support: needs assessments and referrals, household surveys	
Focus Group discussions with landowners (5 FGDs)	Finalise communication and outreach strategy for landowners. Digital and audio-visual outreach to landowners / awareness campaign	Landowner survey, evaluation of landowner satisfaction	
Develop and finalise referral system with Municipal social services in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour	Regular coordination meetings with social services of municipalities (Community Centers)	Regular coordination meetings with social services of municipalities (Community Centers)	
Legal processes for the transfer of management of identified public properties to the SRA	Legal and contractual processes for transfer of identified private empty housing stock to the SRA		

3. Collection of data and Monitoring of housing trends and housing exclusion at city level
 - 3.1 Complete monitoring indicators by fourth half of 2022-first half of 2023
 - 3.2 Signature of MoUs/agreements and protocols for data exchange with relevant institutions (Hellenic Statistical Institute, Municipal services, Ministry of Labour etc.)
 - 3.3 Set-up the Thessaloniki Housing Observatory by 2025 to take over housing monitoring from the Municipal Resilience Observatory
 - 3.4 Maintain an updated database on municipal properties, public properties and private properties and empty homes hosted by the SRA Platform

4. Build on the Housing Platform (www.housing.thessaloniki.gr) as a tool for information management and dissemination:
 - 4.1 GIS system to visualise the results of monitoring and data on homelessness, empty homes, housing



conditions and affordable housing stock

4.2 Maintain and manage an Empty Homes registry and database

4.3 Provision of information and audiovisual awareness material in multiple languages on right to housing, tenants' rights, housing conditions as well as policy and research material

5. Render public housing stock into affordable and social housing units

5.1 Finalise an empty homes mapping study by beginning of 2022 to feed into the SRA database focusing on:

- An appraisal of housing stock in the metropolitan area belonging to public institutions and legal entities thereof
- An appraisal of the housing stock that have been transferred to the banking and financial sector, including funds
- Provide, based on the above, the potential 'mature' stock that could potentially be socialized
- Provide a framework for stock assessment with criteria for the evaluation of the state of the stock (renovation needs, quality etc.)
- Conduct a pilot empty home registration exercise in a sample neighbourhood to test a real mapping of vacant homes methodology to be developed as part of the study

5.2 Renovation of housing stock and upgrading of energy performance of socialized housing stock with the aim to complete 50 units by end of 2023.

6. Develop innovative pilot housing provision actions integrating concepts of social mix, fair urban development, cyclical economy among others:

- Bring to maturity through feasibility studies and complete plans for submission for funding of 2 pilot programmes: 1) Re-use and uptaking of deserted train wagons in West Thessaloniki, 2) in collaboration with private partners transform a building for co-housing and inter-generational housing in West Thessaloniki

Lead Agency/Resources

Lead Agency: MDAT, Municipality of Thessaloniki and other municipalities

Resources: Regional funds, international donors, national funds, in-kind

Cost of measure:

A1: In-kind

A2: 600,000 EUR (200,000 EUR secured with continuation expected to be funded through ESF+)

A3: In-kind & with secured funding for the Resilience Observatory. 50,000 EUR for the Thessaloniki Housing Observatory on a yearly basis as of 2025

A4: Maintenance costs covered by private donors until end of 2024, Housing Platform established with UNHCR and IOM funds, a series of 7 podcasts completed on December 2021 on right to housing with UNHCR funds and Solidarity NOW support

A5: 30,000 EUR for the mapping study (secured funding through structural funds)/ Resilience and Recovery fund to cover 15,000 EUR per household for a maximum of 50 housing units with remaining



units to be covered from either structural funds and/or the national energy upscaling programme EXIKONOMO

A6: EU funds and private donors

Time schedule (short-, mid-, long-term)

Short-term actions (1, 2)

Mid-term and long-term actions (3, 4, 5, 6)

Indicators

- SRA staffed and operational by mid 2022
- At least 200 mature housing units identified by end 2022 potentially transferable to the SRA
- 30 to 50 housing units managed by the SRA by 2023 with a view to increase the stock to 150 by 2025
- Training 100 low-income households per year on tenancy rights and energy efficiency with a view to reduce energy costs by 10% per H/H

Measure #2 – Prevention of Housing Exclusion and Supporting the Social Dimension

Current Situation

As the city-wide study showed there is an increased number of persons who are at once dependent on welfare support and in addition who are under risk of housing exclusion for the following reasons:

- Lack of access to welfare benefits due to pre-requirements
- Rent spikes that welfare benefits are unable to cover
- Risk of evictions, increase in rent arrears
- New poor and increased risk of housing exclusion due to the legal changes affecting the hitherto protected primary residence

Goals of Action

The main goal is to ensure the empowerment and support of groups that are under risk of housing exclusion and homelessness

Proposed Actions

1. Draw up a Prevention of housing exclusion and homelessness Plan for the City outlining holistic measures and linking the Plan with national strategies on homelessness, combating poverty among others: consultations with stakeholders, consultation with national institutions to be completed and adopted by 2025

The following measures are to be undertaken as of mid-2022 and will constitute the initial steps to support prevention measures (note that some activities under other measures are deemed complementary such as monitoring to be conducted by the Housing Observatory and social support



services such as community awareness and empowerment of tenants under Measure

2. Legal support and legal information to support to be provided by the SRA legal team for:
 - Those under risk of eviction
 - Resolution of contractual conflicts between landlords and tenants
 - To ensure individuals and households understand the whole spectrum of their rights as tenants and are aware of the legal pathways for restitution
 - Those hitherto unable to access welfare benefits (undocumented migrants with regularisation processes, new and old communities with the acquisition and provision of pre-required documentation to access benefits)
 - Rental contract negotiation

Lead Agency/Resources

Lead Agency: Municipality of Thessaloniki and MDAT

Resources: Regional funds / EU funds /international donors

Time schedule (short-, mid-, long-term)

Short-term actions (2),

Mid-term and long-term actions (1, 3).

Measure #3 – Advocacy to effectively exercise the Right to Housing

Current Situation

Housing as a right is not in the limelight although the recent pressures and all the more evident and widespread housing exclusion phenomena has led to an increased interest among policy makers, public institutions, media and citizen groups in seeking ways to alleviate housing pressure.

Goals of Measure

To place housing as a right in public discourse and support demand for effective change to ensure that housing as right is guaranteed, including a national housing strategy, but also streamline funding mechanisms from a variety of policy strands to effectively support the implementation of measures that guarantee fair and just access to housing.

Proposed Actions

- A. Develop legal and technical proposals targeting governance structures in order to:
 1. Promote that local authorities acquire the necessary mandate to structurally intervene at local level in the housing market (e.g. rent caps, limitation of short-term rentals, measures to combat financialisation of properties): to this end coordinate with Central Union of Municipalities for the preparation of a legal and technical proposal to be submitted to National Authorities by 2023.



2. Ensure that national legislation facilitates and encourages the provision of social and affordable housing (e.g. tax reductions in socialised property rentals, facilitation of public property management for public good etc.): Comprehensive legal report with proposed legal amendments submitted to key stakeholders by end 2022
3. Support the design of a national housing strategy
4. Maintain close coordination, communication and advocacy with national funding authorities and line ministries to ensure that programming foresees holistic support of social and affordable housing measures as well as housing-led and housing first approaches:
 - Conduct one high level political roundtable in 2022 to coordinate among various ministries and authorities relevant to housing regulation, housing provision and housing quality (e.g. Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Environment and Energy, Ministry of Development among others)
 - Coordinate bi-yearly technical meetings with technical staff of the above institutions
5. Provide accessible information material to the public on right to housing as well as information on services available for the exercise of right to housing through the housing platform as well as the series of trainings outlined under Measure 1

B. a) provide incentives within the limits of the Municipalities' mandate (municipal tax deductions) and promote legal changes and b) regulations that can facilitate the implementation of deterrent and incentive measures for the private sector

Lead Agency/Resources

Lead Agency: Municipalities of the metropolitan area, Central Union of Municipalities, MDAT
Resources: Regional funds / EU funds / own funds and private donors

Time schedule (short-, mid-, long-term)

Short-term actions (A, B)
Mid-term and long-term actions (A, B).

Measure #4 – Facilitation of affordable and social housing

Current Situation

Considering that for comprehensive provision of housing a diversity of provision modalities, models and structures ensure both wider accessibility of the populations in need and increase chances of the viability of measures. Given the overall lack of social housing policy and lack of any institutional mandated body to manage housing issues, coupled with the specific Greek context where housing remains a private, family matter, citizen-originating, or citizen-managed,



non-governmental housing provision schemes are almost non-existent. The role of tenants' associations, grassroots initiatives both for protection of housing rights but also for housing provision are an important aspect of community centered housing delivery. In this respect, the Plan recognizes the need to not only focus on institutional and public measures in guaranteeing the right to housing but also playing an active role in the facilitation of formal and non-formal interventions that can combat housing exclusion and support residents exercise effectively their right to housing.

Goals of Measure

The goal of this measure is twofold: on the one hand it aims at implementing measures to incentivize landlords and owners to socialize the use of their properties and second it aims at creating and facilitating the conditions so that housing initiatives not necessarily under the auspices of the municipality and flourish and develop to their full potential

Proposed Actions

1. Conduct a city-wide analysis of potential support measures that can bolster the exercise of right to housing and a mapping of available unused stock owned by public bodies, funds, banks and private owners (the latter as a neighbourhood based sample)
2. Provide legal assistance and legal information to alternative models of housing provision (CLTs, inter-generational housing, housing cooperatives) as well as encourage the creation of tenants' associations
3. Create fora for continuous dialogue, public participation and engagement with these models and tenants and landlords: at least with a frequency of bi-yearly consultation meetings and/or FGDs with specific sub-groups of beneficiaries (homeless, TCNs)
4. Facilitate the advantageous access to public property for alternative housing models that place right to housing at its center

Lead Agency/Resources

Lead Agency: Municipality of Thessaloniki, MDAT
Resources: Regional funds, international donors, national funds

Time schedule (short-, mid-, long-term)

Short-term actions (1, 2)
Mid-term and long-term actions (3, 4, 5)



Measure #5 – Improving homelessness services and embedding Housing First and Housing led approaches in combating homelessness at city level

Current Situation

Homelessness services are exclusively focused on shelter and day care services, primarily provided by municipalities in collaboration with non-governmental partners, including for street work services.

Goals of Action

To ensure that shelter-based responses don't remain the single viable measure to tackle homelessness and to gradually introduce housing-led and Housing First responses horizontally in homelessness programming and homelessness service provision.

Proposed Actions

- 1) Including a Housing First component in the National Homelessness Programme:
 - An appraisal and evaluation of the results of the Small Scale Action (SSA) which adopts the Housing First approach with four (4) homeless individuals and linking them to the National Homelessness Programme (housing subsidy, support services)
 - Fine-tune the support protocol and methodology established through the SSA to be upscaled for the operational guidelines of the upcoming National Homelessness Programme
 - Maintain the Housing First Network of services established with support from the SSA to facilitate HF Integrated Case Management
 - Raise funds to support street work teams run by non-governmental organisations
- 2) Drawing up a strategy for de-shelterisation of homelessness for the City of Thessaloniki - with a view to phasing out the shelter based approach to housing-led and Housing First approach

Lead Agency/Resources

Lead Agency: Municipality of Thessaloniki and MDAT

Resources: Regional funds / EU funds (ESF+)

Time schedule (short-, mid-, long-term)

Short-term (1)

- SSA to be evaluated by 2022 and an HF component upscaled to the National Homelessness Programme in the next programming period



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- 2 street work teams have secured funding from 2023 through 2025
- Mid and long-term (1, 2)
- De-shelterisation strategy finalised by 2024



7. Risk Matrix

Risk	Risk level	Mitigation measure
Financial sustainability of the SRA cannot be guaranteed due to lack of harmonisation of national funds	Medium in the short term, low in the long term	The advocacy and awareness related measures are designed to actively engage all stakeholders throughout planning and implementation in order to intervene in a timely manner in the programming periods of ESF+ and ERDF funding mechanisms
Lack of interest by owners/landlords in joining the scheme	Low	A robust communication and information system ensuring that landlords are aware of the incentives for socialising their properties and deterrents for not doing so
Incentive and deterrent schemes remain limited due to lack of legislative and regulative changes at national level and at the level of local authorities	Medium	Engagement of key and central stakeholders such as Central Union of Municipalities to exert pressure for facilitatory change Inclusion of advocacy measures which include legal and technical inputs for legislative and regulatory changes Tapping into national coordination mechanisms to exert pressure for change



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