

Informal note 1

THE GENEVA UN CHARTER ON SUSTAINABLE HOUSING 

Implementation of the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing

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THE GENEVA UN CHARTER ON SUSTAINABLE HOUSING 

Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing

Main purpose: to ensure the access to decent, affordable and healthy housing in the ECE region

Scope: to improve the sustainability of housing in the ECE region through effective policies and actions at all levels, supported by international cooperation



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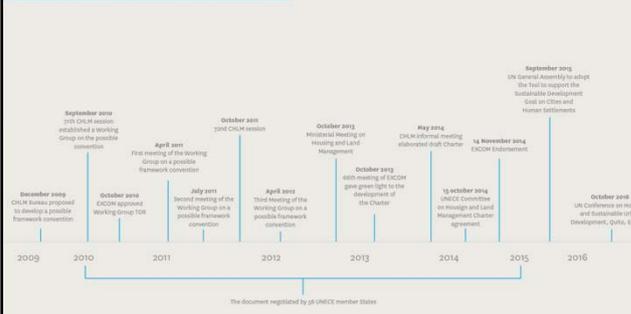
Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing

Timeline

- The document negotiated by 56 UNECE member States in 2009 – 2015
- UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management agreed on the Charter on 15 October 2014
- UNECE endorsed the Charter on 16 April 2015



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Timeline of the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing:

- December 2009: CHLM Bureau proposed to develop a possible framework convention
- September 2010: 15th CHLM session establishing a Working Group on the possible convention
- October 2010: ECOCM approved Working Group TOR
- April 2011: First meeting of the Working Group on a possible framework convention
- July 2011: Second meeting of the Working Group on a possible framework convention
- October 2011: 16th CHLM session
- April 2012: Third meeting of the Working Group on a possible framework convention
- October 2012: Ministerial Meeting on Housing and Land Management
- October 2013: 60th meeting of ECOCM gave green light to the development of the Charter
- May 2014: CHLM informal meeting elaborated draft Charter
- 15 October 2014: UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management Charter Agreement
- 14 November 2014: ECOCM endorsement
- September 2015: UN General Assembly to adopt the Charter to support the Sustainable Development Goal on Cities and Human Settlements
- October 2016: UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, Quito, Ecuador

The document negotiated by 56 UNECE member States



Connection to other international processes

- A tool to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal on Cities and Human Settlements that the UN General Assembly is expected to adopt in September 2015
- The Charter is the UNECE contribution to the **Habitat III** (The UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, October 2016, Quito, Ecuador)



Long term focus of the Charter implementation

This Charter is a non legally binding instrument. It presents a form of “soft law” and does not create mandatory obligations.

The Charter contains general principles, which will continue to be relevant in years to come whereas a legally binding agreement may lose touch with changing needs.



Flexibility of the instrument

As a non-legally binding instrument, it is flexible and allows member States to tailor their policies in line with their current capabilities, thereby avoiding a situation where the provisions of an agreement are made to accommodate all concerned parties.

This lead to more effective and more sustainable long term implementation.



Long term focus of the Charter implementation

Implementation takes place through the national laws, strategies, action plans etc established in the specific national context, which is very different from country to country.

The signatories are free to pursue the path they wish to achieve the goals of the Charter.

De facto, this instrument will have an influence on the signatories through its focus on the long run.



How can member States implement the Charter?

It will remain to the member States discretion to implement any measures that are to achieve the goals set out in the Charter. This can be done in different ways, whether it be through new legislation, an overall policy plan that targets the goals set forth in the Charter, or “soft law” methods that encourage those who may have an impact on the sustainability of housing.

**Case Example of a non-legally binding instrument: Magna Carta (1215)**

The document drafted by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1215 that set out rights which King John of England agreed to.

In 1297, that the Magna Carta was granted a statutory basis under Edward I. Magna Carta was not legally enforceable and did not pose obligations upon the state. Yet, its impact was that it served as a catalyst for civil rights.

**Case Example of a non-legally binding instrument: Magna Carta (1215)**

Today it is regarded as being the first document that constituted the uncoded constitution of the United Kingdom.

The main rights which were proposed in the Magna Carta were later incorporated into legislation to make them legally binding.

**Recommendations for the implementation**National level

- Translate the Charter and its promotional materials (Power Point presentation, a poster) into national languages. Send copies of translated Charter documents to the secretariat for uploading to the website at <http://www.unece.org/housing/charter.html>
- Organise national and local meetings as well as events as part of international meetings to disseminate information on the Charter
- Implement through national regulatory framework
- Communicate: articles in journals, newspapers, newsletters; social media etc. Organise research



Recommendations for the implementation

UNECE level

- Establish a network of experts and **centres of excellence for the implementation of the Charter in cooperation with interested countries, international or national organisations** to conduct:
 - Dissemination of the information on the Charter and its principles
 - Advisory services
 - Capacity building at national and local levels
 - Networking including cities, other stakeholders



Recommendations for the implementation

Possible next steps

Interest to host centers of excellence was expressed by the **Ministry of Architecture and Construction of Belarus** (Letter of 2 December 2015) and **Estonian Union of Co-operative Homeowner Associations** (Letter of 3 December 2015)

Invite several more nominations possibly from different subregions.



Recommendations for the implementation

Possible next steps

- Prepare a concise **Guide**, including **Terms of Reference of and a procedure for the establishment of Centres of Excellence**
- Establish a network of experts and CoE
- Prepare additional dissemination materials (posters, a postcard, USB sticks, etc.; printing the Charter in different languages)
- Organise a regular survey of member States on the implementation

Secretariat invites in-kind expert or financial support for the preparation of the guide and dissemination materials



Recommendations for the implementation

UNECE level

Planned international events to discuss the implementation of the Charter:

- European Habitat,
- A workshop in Copenhagen (tbc)
- A joint workshop with Housing Europe in Geneva, September 2016
- A high-level workshop in Minsk, November 2016
- A workshop in Vienna, 2017 (supported by City of Vienna)

