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## Inauguration of the SHE Project in Portugal is a huge success

**The turning point in the mission of the Housing Cooperatives in Portugal**

**Ponte da Pedra, Matosinhos, Portugal – 28<sup>th</sup> November 2006**

More than 250 decision-makers from local governments, building companies, professionals, housing promoters, academic and housing Cooperatives world and citizens from all over Portugal attended this milestone event for NORBICETA and the Portuguese Housing Cooperative Movement.

The Inauguration of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase of the Ponte da Pedra Building made part of a joint initiative of the National Federation of Housing Cooperatives, the National Institute of Housing and the Council House of Matosinhos and closed with a gold key the Seminar "For a Sustainable Land" that was held on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2006 in the Noble Room of the Matosinhos Municipality.



Kicking off the conference was the President of the Cooperative Union, Guilherme Vilaverde who stated that *"through the SHE experience partly funding by the EC, our housing cooperative movement is paving the way for a better standard of housing and more sustainable communities, with less social conflicts and more social cohesion [...] with the recent*

*adoption of the Declaration for the quality, our housing coops are now fully committed to integrate sustainability in the every day practice".*



The President of the Board of Directors of the National Institute of Housing, José Teixeira Monteiro remarked in the introduction that *"this successful project lead by the Cooperative Union shows that is possible to create vibrant centres of life for people with both local and global responsibility for the environment [...] This housing project will be a great inspiration for other housing promoters as well as private and municipal clients"*.



The morning session started off with the SHE Coordinator, Alain Lusardi, who introduced the objectives and methodology of the demonstration project partly financed by the EC. He also illustrated the integrated approach used in some Italian SHE projects and explained the first impacts on the building and on housing cooperative practice at the national scale.

He stressed that *"we need more progressive urban actors and politicians with courage to set goals and incentives for society to follow. I really think that there are no technological barriers to sustainable development, only the ones of non technical character or lack of political will. In fact, often politicians are reluctant to listen. These are serious non technical barriers. A fresh attitude is required, from the national and local politician to the bricklayer [...] it's about time that the decision-makers realise this and start setting aside more land – and more incentives – for sustainable housing: This not utopia, this a necessity [...] Many municipal land planners should understand that there exists a demand from the bottom and that citizens ask more and more to live in eco-friendly homes in sustainable neighbourhood [...] In the long cultural road, the Cooperative Union acts really as a critical friend to the local government and as an ambassador for sustainable housing development"*.

Concluding his speech, he thanked the Portuguese SHE team (Norbiceta, Fenache and the well-experienced scientific support of the University of Porto) for its valuable contribution in this challenge, and in particularly he recognized the importance of the effort of the late Mateus, whose vision allowed such an important step for Portuguese Housing Cooperatives that, thanks to him, also participated in this European initiative.

Carlos Coelho, designer of the SHE Portuguese project, spoke about the key sustainable design issues of the project such as access to facilities, access for sunlight, and energy analyses and explained the integrated approach implemented in terms of

social, cultural, environmental and urban level and presented some proposals to promote the inclusion of sustainable housing, of sustainable urban management in political agenda and policies at local level.

The Municipal Director of the local Land Management, Luis Miranda, drew the growing urban route of Matosinhos, characterizing the territory and calling the attention to some needs to which a solution must be found. He spoke especially about the infrastructure and accessibilities, underlining the conclusion of the very recent IP4.

To conclude this morning session, guest speakers were appropriately challenged during the interactive *question and answer* session and discussed about ways to overcome the remaining barriers facing the continued growth of sustainability on the building sector.

The Director of the Building Company that constructed the project, João Gomes Oliveira, highlighted the positive impact of this experience from his point of view and said that *"the Project of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase of the Ponte da Pedra was an extremely important experience for the high technical details that it demanded to the construction process. Initially, we were afraid for its high innovation content. But, we were fully committed to the overall building process and at the end this experience added a great value to the experience of the company and, in the future, the company will be able to give its suggestions and technical solutions to designers and housing promoters in similar promotions. Also in our technical promotion designs, we will use the same building criteria. This project has, in this way, proved to be extremely important for the growing and development of the building company itself, apart from the much better relationship with the environment that sustainable construction makes possible"*.

After Lunch, the short afternoon session was opened by keynote speakers of the local and central government, the Mayor of the Council House, Guilherme Pinto, and the



Under Secretary of State of Land and City Management, João Ferrão. Both of them have been close watchers of the SHE experience for its integrated approach and emphasized the national and local guidance and leadership of the Fenache Coops to achieve sustainable cities and social cohesion.

The Mayor of the Council House announced that the Municipality will develop and implement measures

for the enhancement of sustainability. These concrete commitments will range from the very local, such as supporting green building with specific incentives to more comprehensive efforts on land use planning. The Mayor assumed, as well, that the next public buildings and housing development must respect the same sustainability principles.



On the other hand, João Ferrão recognized the Cooperative Union as the national pioneer for sustainability in the building sector and he said *"I'm really convinced that Ponte da Pedra building will have a catalyzing effect for the other actors of the housing sector[...] It is with a great pleasure that I join this initiative and this experience of Ponte da Pedra. We stimulate social behaviors – people, eco friendly values; A democratic process – this good example is economically feasible and accessible to everyone, since the price of each dwelling of the Ponte da Pedra only had an increase of 5%. Sustainability is a subject for everyone, reproducible. Housing Cooperatives have proved this. The State will vigorously help the reproduction of this experience and spread it as a best practice"*.



At the end of the conference, all the participants traveled to visit the Ponte da Pedra site building. Guilherme Vilaverde and the design team guided the site tour, focused on the sustainable and innovative aspects of the construction.



During the on site presentation, the President of the Cooperative Union introduced the user's manual, aimed to educate future inhabitants in the use and maintenance of sustainable dwellings.

The event also had the presence of the Under Secretary of State for Land and City Management, João Ferrão. that recognized that *"this moment really is the turn over of the Cooperative Sector"* [...] *"from now on, we don't have any excuses not to do, at least, the same"*, he said.



Guilherme Vilaverde said to conclude this one day meeting that the *"Housing Cooperatives must, at least, do the same in their future promotions, but, if possible, do it even better, showing the society that the quality of these dwellings is far above today's common practices of housing construction [...] with this First Cooperative Building of Sustainable*

*Construction in Portugal, we are building the future and it is a commitment attended by everybody and that it is worthwhile to everybody. We'll continue this way but decisions makers have to help us"*.

**Rapporteur:** Liliana Marques, Norbiceta



Please hereby enclosed the **Conclusions** presented by Ricardo Bexiga – INH (National Institute of Housing) at the end of the meeting "FOR A SUSTAINABLE LAND":

1. Sustainable Housing means a new approach and a new methodology for housing promotion and construction, supported on the process innovation of urban planning and construction management;
2. Sustainable Housing represents an integrated perspective, in the medium and long term, for the competitive and sustainable development of the territory, especially the development of sustainable cities;
3. Sustainable Housing is a relevant instrument for economic growth, social cohesion and environmental protection in Portugal;
4. Sustainable Housing represents a challenge for the country in a partnership development between civil society and State, as far as the policies of the

Environment and Land Management are concerned and according to the principles and values of the quality protection and sustainability;

5. Sustainable Housing shows that we can develop new approaches to the building process and urban development, considering different social, environmental, cultural and economic strategies;
6. Sustainable Housing consists on a compromise of cooperation and solidarity, especially between generations, where the Cooperative movement assumes a particular role.



For Further information, please visit the SHE Website: [www.she.coop](http://www.she.coop)

**Federabitazione Europe**

Project Coordination

Email: [federabitazioneurope@confcooperative.it](mailto:federabitazioneurope@confcooperative.it)

### **SHE Partnership in Portugal**

#### **FENACHE**

National Federation of Housing Cooperatives

Person contact:

Guilherme Vilaverde

Orlando Vargas - [orlandovargas@mch-algarve.pt](mailto:orlandovargas@mch-algarve.pt)

Margarida Santos - [santos.margarida@mail.telepac.pt](mailto:santos.margarida@mail.telepac.pt)

#### **NORBICETA**

União Cooperativas de habitação, UCRL

Person contact:

Josè Coimbra - [coimbra@setebicas.com](mailto:coimbra@setebicas.com)

Liliana Marques - [Liliana@setebicas.com](mailto:Liliana@setebicas.com)

#### **IDMEC**

Instituto de Engenharia mechanica

Person contact:

Prof. Eduardo Maldonado – [ebm@netcabo.pt](mailto:ebm@netcabo.pt)

Prof. Manuela Almeida - [malmeida@civil.uminho.pt](mailto:malmeida@civil.uminho.pt)



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