

Response to Consultation

Date: 21 November 2008
Consultation: Consideration of European Issues

Introduction

The Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) represents 40 housing associations. This includes 33 of the associations registered and regulated by the Department for Social Development (DSD). Collectively, these associations provide 30,000 good quality, affordable homes for renting or equity sharing. Further information is available at www.nifha.org

Background

NIFHA's members are responsible for about twenty five percent of all social housing stock in Northern Ireland. Over the years we have forged strong links with our counterparts in England, Scotland and Wales, as well as colleagues in the Republic of Ireland. Whilst we primarily focus on comparative analysis of legislation and policy, we are committed to the development of Europe wide initiatives and positively contribute to the work of The European Liaison Committee for Social Housing; CECODHAS.

General Comments

- A. We welcome the proposed terms of reference for the consideration of European issues within the Northern Ireland Assembly, not only for the benefit of Europe as a whole, but also more specifically for the benefit of all Northern Ireland citizens. This will provide a good opportunity for voices to be heard at European level.
- B. We would anticipate that such a role will enable assemble members to "keep their finger on the pulse" so that they are well informed and up to date on any European issues that are relevant within the context of Northern Ireland. This is likely to require a direct and regular briefing from MEPs as well as detailed discussion and opportunity for comment where necessary.
- C. Considering the work of the Barroso Taskforce will require that members are familiar with this matter. It is essential that those involved are well informed and kept up to date with taskforce activities.
- D. We would greatly welcome any opportunity to consult with assembly and/or committee members in relation to any significant European housing, development and/or planning issues that they feel may have a significant impact on the provision of social housing in Northern Ireland. We would also be happy to provide some information on the ongoing work of CECODHAS within a wider European context.

I trust that you will find these comments useful and if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Submitted on behalf of NIFHA by:



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