

Housing reform and residential segregation –
Pre- and post- reform situation. Case of Estonia

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1. The lack of living space and queues for getting an apartment are the characteristics of the Soviet regime time in Eastern Europe. Extensive internal migration and urbanization caused an urgent need for living space in the Baltic region (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), which could not be satisfied because of inadequate construction work. The lack of living space was alleviated by a widely spread system of hostels for workers. According to the census carried out in 1989 over 80 thousand people in Estonia (5% of the whole population) lived in a hostel. Workers hostel was a unique social institution. With its help, the primary need for living place was solved for grown up orphans, former prisoners and immigrants (Kõre, 1998).

In socialist society the lack (shortage) of housing was a problem that attracted rather much attention. In Estonia and the other Baltic States people's spatial behavior and factors affecting it was extensively studied since the 1970s. Physical state of housing, satisfaction with living conditions and requirements about the dwelling and other such topics were in the focus of social psychological, sociological as well as human geographical studies. As the exchange of information with Western colleagues was limited the results of research conducted in 1970-1990 are almost unknown. One of the very few Eastern European scholars whose studies were known and appreciated was J. Hegedüs.

The studies carried out in the 1970-1980s in Tallinn and Tartu indicated that the socialist economic system failed to lose differences in living conditions and way of life. In the shade of a slogan of creating a uniform, homogeneous society, differentiation of living conditions took place that in some cases assumed the character of segregation.

2. In describing social development, concepts of equality, accessibility and affordability are important factors. Norris & Shields (2004, 2007) describe living conditions in enlarged European Union as follows: Good housing conditions in the

„long standing“ northern member states, intermediate conditions in most of the remaining „long-standing“ member states and poor conditions in many of the „new“ Central and Eastern European member states.

Having analyzed the housing politics of the European Union’s candidate countries FEANTSA (the European Federation of National Organizations Working with the Homeless) stated the following in 2003: “The housing situation in the Accession States is quite different. All Accession States face the following urgent problems to different degrees: 1) Reduced role of public authorities in the area of housing; 2) very difficult access to housing for low-income families because of dramatically reduced public housing sector and very small private rental sector; 3) rapidly deteriorating quality of the housing stock; 4) increasing poverty among homeowners; 5) no comprehensive homeless policies

(http://feantsa.org/files/DOCS/EN/housing_accession_states.doc).

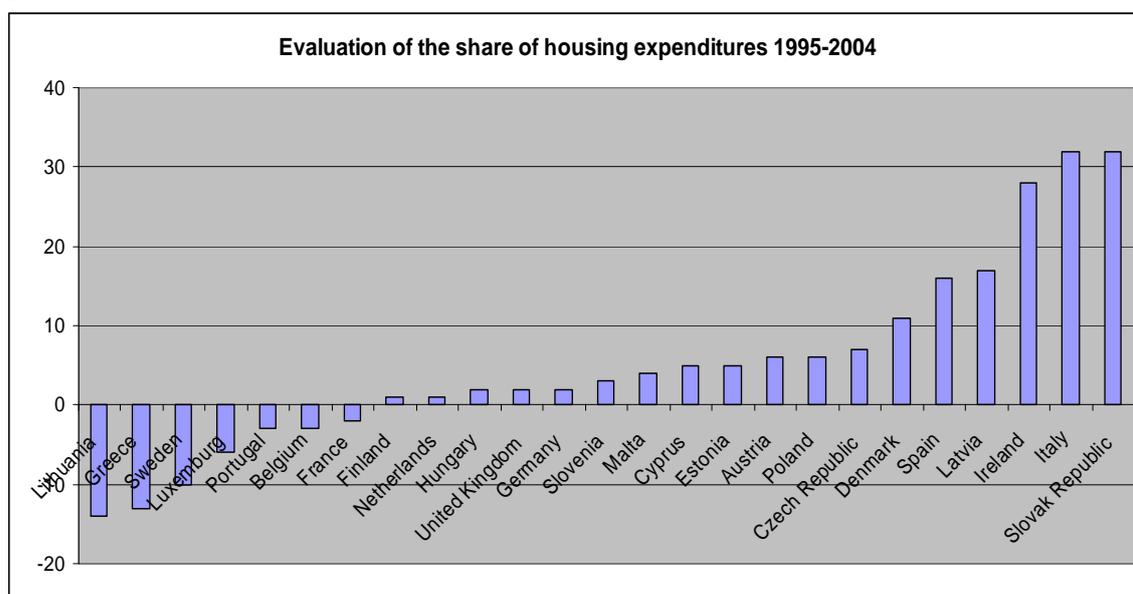
Table 1. Housing quality and affordability in selected European countries (data of 2000-2003)

	Tap water	Lavatory	Bath/ shower	Medium floor area (in m ²)	Housing costs (% of household consumption expenditure)
Denmark	99,9	99,9	94,3	109,3	27,8
Finland	98	96	99	85,7	25,7
Sweden	100	100	100	71	29,4
Estonia	82	72	68	68,9	22,2
Latvia	83,2	77,8	67	40-60	21,3
Lithuania	83,2	77,8	67	40-60	21,3

Source: *Housing Statistics in the European Union. 2006. Rome*

3. In the beginning years of 1990 and 2000, the housing expenditures had a significant raise in all the regions, including the Baltic States. During 1995-2005, the housing expenditures showed a light decrease in Lithuania (Figure 1).

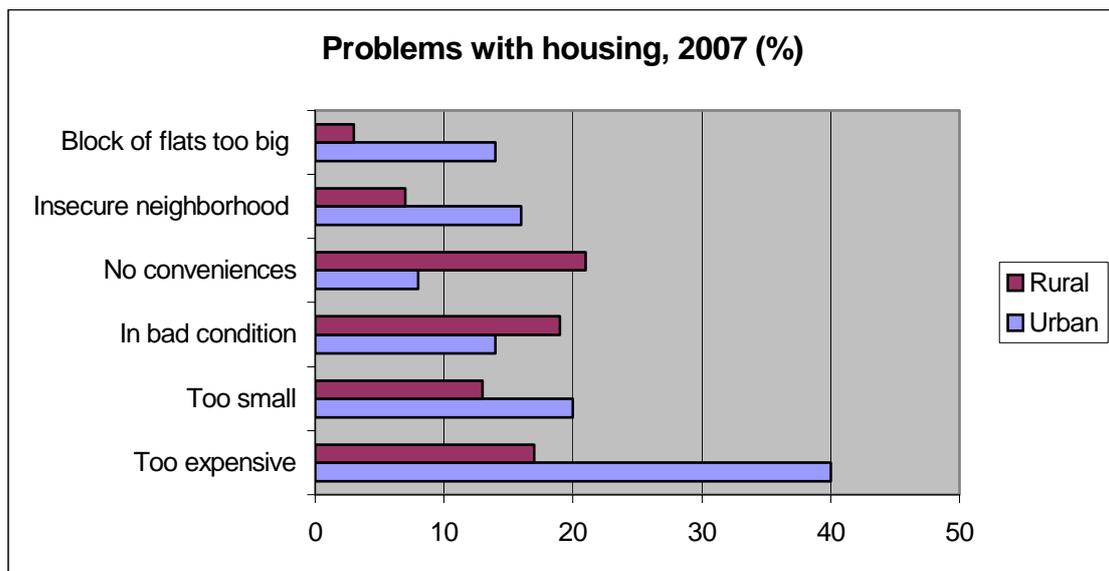
Figure1. Evaluation of the share of housing expenditures on total expenditures 1995-2004



Source: *First colloquium "Current developments in housing policies and housing markets in Europe..."*

The share of households, for which housing costs were "a heavy burden" has decreased, but is high as before. In 2007 in Latvia 28.5% of households stated their housing costs were a heavy burden, in Lithuania 27.2% and in Estonia 28.2%. But the poorest households (the ones represented in the first and second quintile) feel the burden of the housing costs much more explicitly, regardless of otherwise positive trend.

Figure 2. Problems with housing, Estonia 2007 (%)



Source: *Estonian social survey, 2007*

4. Housing sector development in Baltic States in 1990's has been influenced by liberal reforms implemented after the collapse of the communist regime in 1991. Welfare issues have had a minor importance, and became part of political agendas in the end of 1990s (Hendrikson and others, 2000). Following the oil crisis in the 1970s, Western-European countries started reforms in welfare state (welfare state crisis, see Pierson et al), which also had an influence on Central- and Eastern-European states' social politics. The characteristics of Western-European housing policies of 1980-1990s are as follows:

1. Decentralization of housing policy (closer contact with users);
2. Privatization of public housing (longer term implications);
3. Reduction of public finance in housing;
4. Home-ownership seen as tenure of aspiration (asset based welfare state).

Housing privatization, restitution (the return of illegally expropriated property back to their pre-WW II owners) and development of housing market (liberalization of property transaction, liberalization of rents etc.) were three pillars of housing reforms in 1990-s Baltic States. Techniques of privatization differ from state to state, but general results are similar. Dominant form of home ownership in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania is owner-occupied housing.

Today, there are many new tendencies in Western-European states' (UK, France, Spain) housing policy: 1. Recognition of severe shortages of affordable housing leading governments to devise measures to increase provision, 2. Social (affordable) housing back on the political agenda and, 3. Policies and incentives to increase supply of rental dwellings (in general, and social rental in particular) (Cosme, 2008). Only Lithuanian housing strategy 2020 has some similarities in their housing policies.

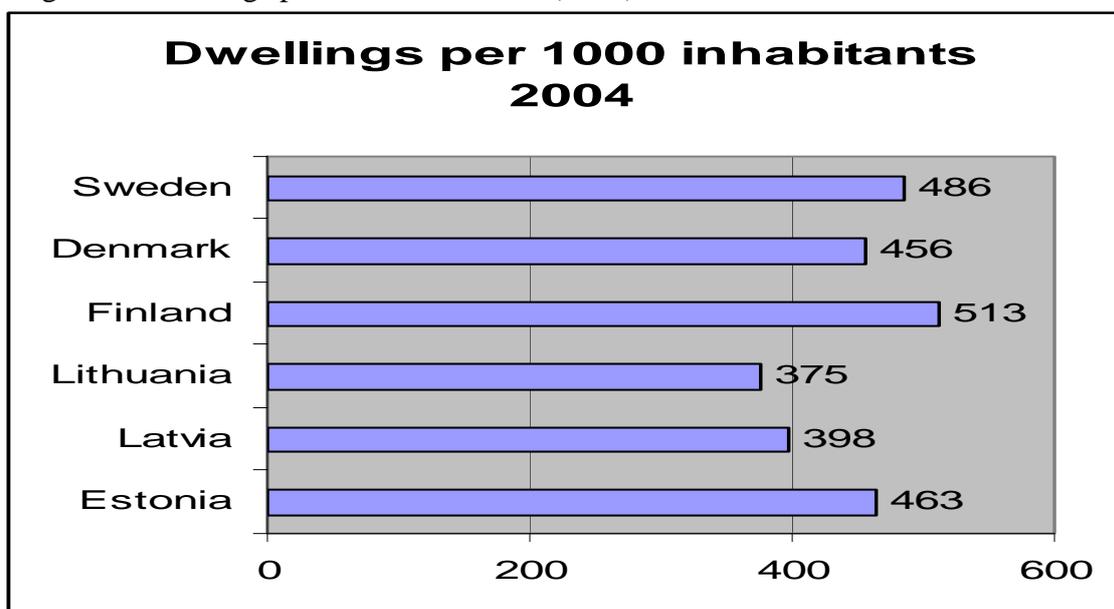
Table 2. Public rental sector in CEE countries, before 1990 and after 2000

	Public rental sector before 1990.a. %	Public rental sector after 2000.a. %	Privatization %
Estonia	61,0	5,2	91,5
Bulgaria	6,6	3,0	54,5
Croatia	24,0	2,9	87,9
Lithuania	60,8	2,4	96,1
Latvia	59,0	16,0	72,9
Poland	31,6	16,1	49,1
Romania	32,7	2,7	91,7
Slovakia	27,7	6,5	76,5
Slovenia	31,0	3,0	90,3
Czech Republic	39,1	17,0	56,5
Hungary	23,0	4,0	82,6

Source: *First colloquium "Current developments in housing policies and housing markets in Europe..."*

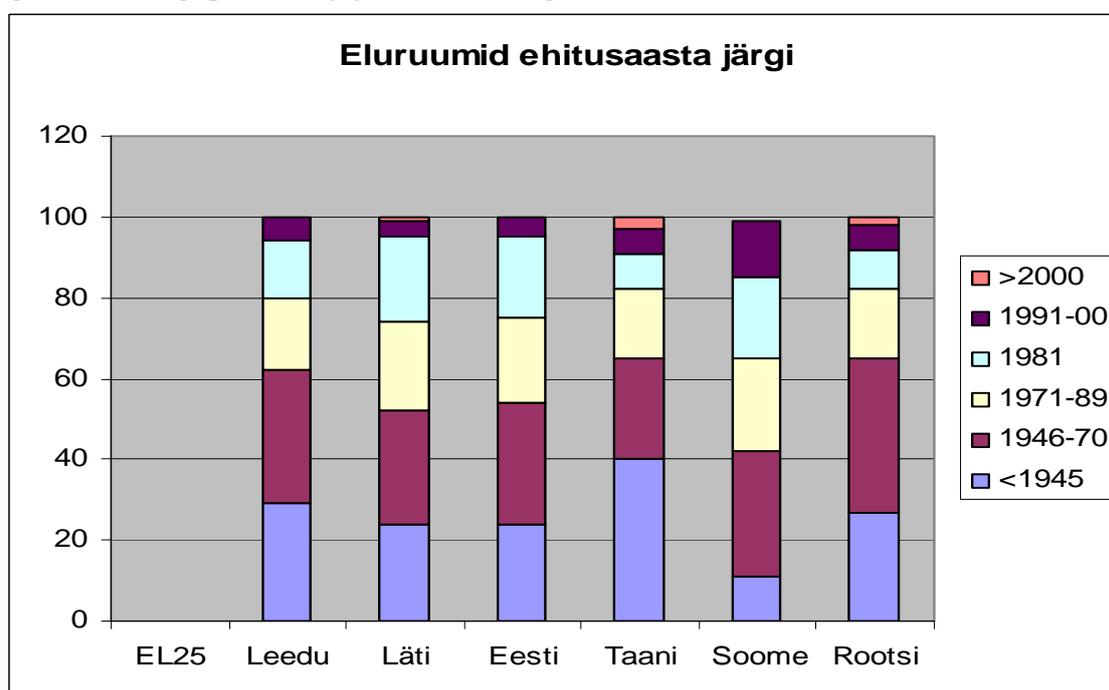
5. In 1992, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania approved the National Housing Program until 2005. In 2004 in compliance with changes of state economical situation and experience of implementing the Housing Program, the Government approved Lithuanian Housing Strategy until 2020. The first national conceptual views on housing reform in Latvia were stated in 1996, two major policy documents – „The National Action Plan” of the National Report for Habitat II Conference (Istanbul 1996) and „The Housing Policy Concept” were developed and approved. The Estonian government approved the Estonian national housing strategy in February 2003. The new (second) housing strategy for 2008-2013 was approved in January 2008. In Estonia and Latvia the capital cities Tallinn and Riga have approved their local housing strategies.

Figure 3. Dwellings per 1000 inhabitants (2004)



Source: *Housing Statistics in the European Union. 2006. Rome*

Figure 4. Living quarters by year of building



6. The supply of housing is in average relatively good in the Baltic States (the total number of dwellings even exceeds the number of households, or are in balance). Although the structural distribution of the housing stock does not correspond to the social need. There is a lack of adequate standard for housing in larger urban areas, often more than one

generation have to occupy the same dwelling because most of the young do not have access to housing. A large number of dwellings are located in multi-apartment buildings.

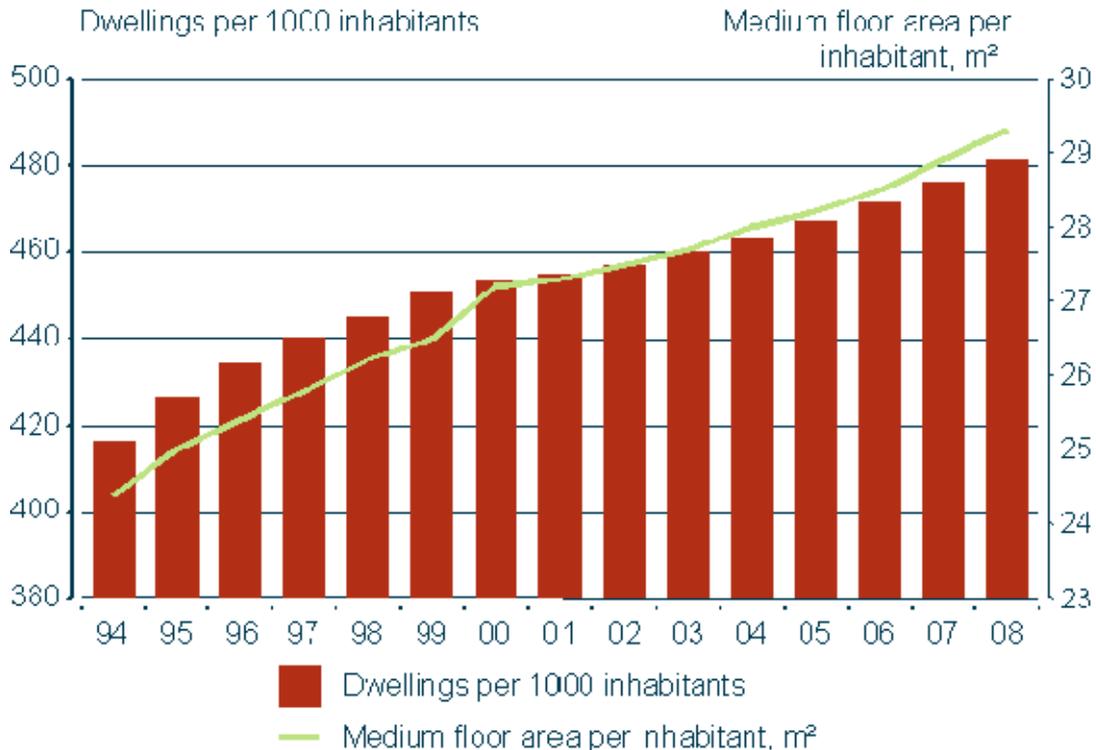
Table 3. Housing situation: the number of households and dwellings

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
Total population (thousands)	1,334.4	2,281.3	3,384.9
Total number of households (thousands)	582.1	802.8	1,356.8
Total number of inhabited dwellings (thousands)	537.9	795.7	1,190.6
Vacant conventional dwellings (%)	10,9 ¹	0,3 ²	3,7 ³

¹2002; ²2005; ³2001

Source: 2000 Round Off Population and Housing Censuses in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. 2003. Vilnius; Housing Statistics in the European Union. 2006. Rome,

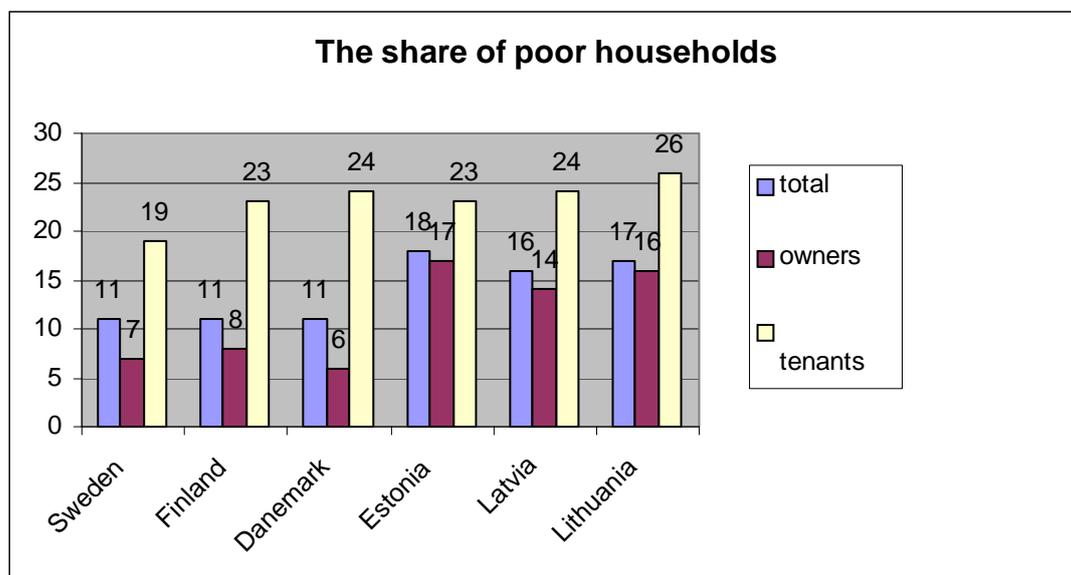
Figure 4. The number of living quarters and average living space in Estonia 1994–2008



6. The social situation and the social politics in the Baltic's is similar. First, the percentage of persons from society, with problems of subsistence, is high (in

Lithuania 21%, in Latvia 19% and in Estonia 18% persons live at the risk of poverty; the EU 25 average is 16%, Eurostat, 2005).

Figure 5. The share of poor households among the owners of living quarters and tenants in 2004



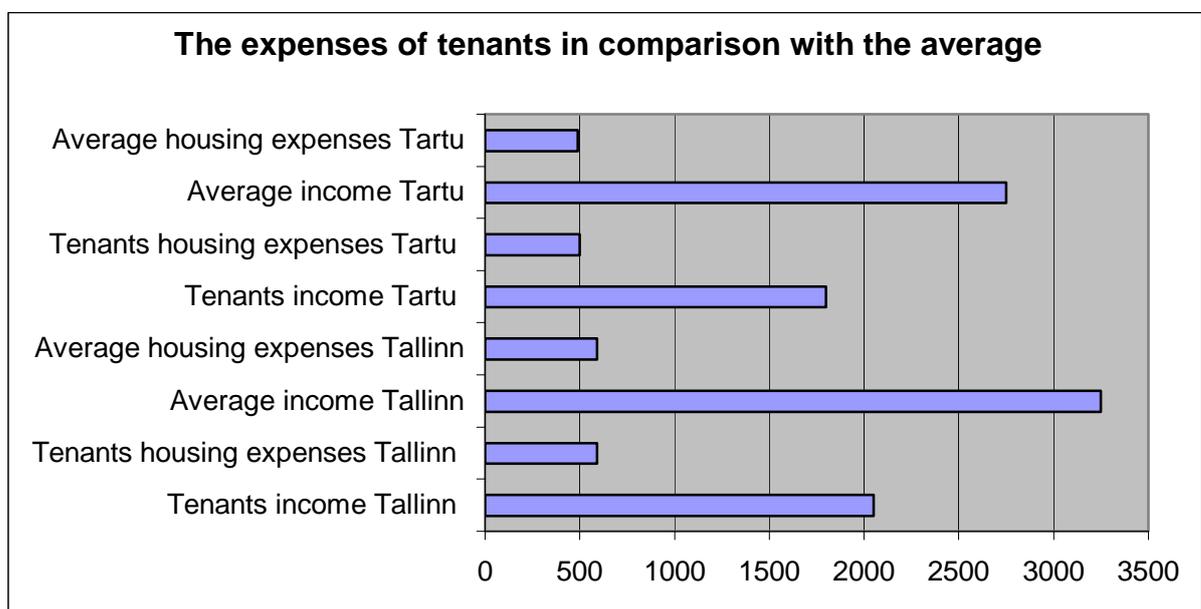
Source: Eurostat

The focus is on children, elderly and persons with disabilities. Second, the Baltic's are moving towards neo-liberal approach in social protection (from welfare state to workfare state). Third, social-welfare is not a part of the social politics; the responsibility to offer social services lays on local governments. Lithuania and Latvia try to even up the social service organization by validating service standards. Estonia started with working out the standards for state based services in 2000, but current success is moderate

The focus is on children, elderly and persons with disabilities. Second, the Baltic's are moving towards neo-liberal approach in social protection (from welfare state to workfare state). Third, social-welfare is not a part of the social politics; the responsibility to offer social services lays on local governments. Housing problems rank often high among the daily tasks of social workers, but among political problems they do not come to the fore. Lithuania and Latvia try to even up the social service organization by validating service standards. Estonia started with working out the standards for state based services in 2000, but current success is moderate

Comparing the share of poor households among the owners and tenants we are surprised to find that in the Nordic countries the differences are even higher than in the Baltic states. We can state that dwellers in social living quarters as well as those in restituted living quarters are residualized groups in the Baltic countries (Lithuania is an exception in this sense). However, it cannot be said on the basis of Figure 4 the homogeneity of society in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania is smaller than in Sweden, Finland, and Denmark.

Figure 6. The revenues and expenses of tenants of restituted living quarters in comparison with the average in Tallinn and Tartu (2005, EEK)



Source: *Tallinna tagastatud majade üürikuue eluasemetingimused, sotsiaalmajanduslik olukord ja eluasemestrategieid. 2005; Tartu tagastatud majade üürikuue olukord ja eluasemestrategieid 2005*

7. Extreme form of poverty is homelessness. In second half of 1990s poverty in the Baltic States has rather extensively been studied with the help of the UN Development program, above all on the basis of Household Budget Survey (HBS) data (Estonian human development report, 1999). Unfortunately, these studies do not include the homeless as well as some other marginal groups. Former (1990s) official social policy documents (Poverty reduction in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, 2000) do not even mention such group as the homeless. The chapter on Estonia at least mentions marginal groups while the analysis on the other two Baltic States lacks that. In the first social inclusion action plans composed after the Baltic's` joining the EU (Latvian National Action Plan for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion (2004-

2006), National Action Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion in 2004-2006 Republic of Lithuania, Estonian's National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2004-2006) homelessness as a problem has been mentioned in one or another way (Homeless people are one of the most vulnerable groups whose appearance is related to the consequences of rapid economic changes, NAP 2004-2006 Latvia etc).

8. After the Baltic's joining with the EU in 2004, a rapid economical growth went off in the Baltic's. Unemployment has abruptly decreased (unemployment rate in 2006 Lithuania 5,6%, Estonia 5,9%, Latvia 6,8, EUROSTAT). Due to that, the attitude towards poverty, unemployment, homelessness etc. as a problem has vastly changed. FEANTSA concludes, that the NAP-s Inclusion has indicated a clear change in the importance attached to homelessness and housing in the different EU Member States, which is clear from the evaluation reports produced by the European Commission

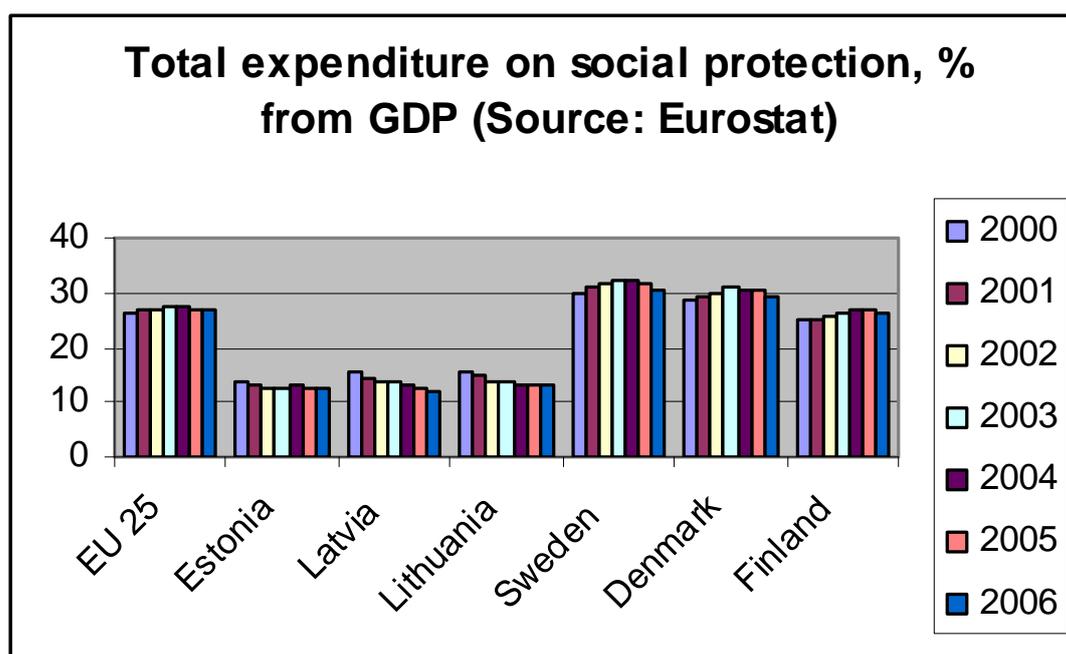
Over the past 5 years: from homelessness and housing as urgent policy issues for some Member States (1st Joint Inclusion Report [2001](#)), for most Member States (2nd Joint Inclusion report [2004](#)), for all new Member States (Report on NAP-s Inclusion of new Member States [2005](#)), to homelessness as one of the 7 key priorities for all 25 Member States (1st Joint Report Social Protection & Social Inclusion [2005](#)) (FEANTSA statement of the urgent need to tackle homelessness: a key message of the 2007 Joint report on social protection and social inclusion. March 2007).

Joint Memorandum on Social Inclusion (2003), National Action Plan on Social Inclusion Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania 2004-2006 has mentioned homeless persons as a group at risk of social exclusion. Policy on Social Risk groups of population has nominated several categories of persons at risk of social exclusion: pre-retirement age unemployed, young unemployed, ex-prisoners, long-term unemployed, etc. However, there are no clear state policy improvements in any country during 2005-2006 that emphasizes the need to assist these categories of population. The problem of homelessness is clearly handled as individual, not structural problems. In the case of homeless, it has also referred that they have the indications of homeless-culture (Dobelniece, 2007). The NAP Social Exclusion 2006-2008 and 2008-2010 of all three countries, have less focus on general poverty and the different forms of it, including people in housing need. "The EU approach to social inclusion does not consist in assisting the poor, but in helping them out of poverty by ensuring their participation in

innovative economic activities” (Cunška, Muravska, 2009). This is not totally wrong, albeit too simplistic view on EU-s social inclusion policy.

9. Social protection costs from GDP in 2000-s are decreased in the Baltic States and the amenities of rapid expanding economy can't come into the persons depending on social security and social welfare *de facto* (see Figure 6)

Figure 7. Total expenditure on social protection (Eurostat, 2006)



10. Changes occurring during the transition period have affected all spheres of social life including the spatial arrangement of life in Central and Eastern European countries. Economic inequality is manifested on macro level (the share of metropolitan region Tallinn (Estonia) in GNP grew from 53% in 1996 to 61% in 2006) as well as on micro level (Gini coefficient characterizing the difference of incomes is stable at the level of 3.5 – 3.7). A rather new topic that attracted only little attention during the transition period is residential segregation.

The maintenance of residential areas – tenement buildings - built at the beginning of the 20th century worsened considerably in 1960 – 1980 because these districts did not spend on repairing and maintenance of these dwelling houses. During the past decade local governments in bigger Estonian cities have conducted studies about people’s satisfaction with living environment. The findings suggest that satisfaction with living

conditions in Tallinn grew between 1995 and 2005, over ten years after the housing reform, nearly half (49%) of the respondents had improved their living conditions. Investment into housing differs several times by city districts (in private residential areas half of the households have made such investments while in apartment houses only 20-25% have done this. Due to good location even suburbs built at the beginning of the 20th century have by now become neighborhoods with improving environment. Alongside with growing satisfaction with living conditions low pace of renovation of tenement buildings in private as well as public ownership is a problem. Only 10 percent of the tenants of denationalized houses state that living conditions after the reform have improved (the overall percentage was 49).

Thus, it can be concluded that as a result of housing reform in the 1990s in Estonian cities there started a process that helps to reduce residential segregation. During the period of planned economy resources were concentrated into new building projects. Market divides investments spatially more evenly and has given positive impulses to the development of nearly all neighborhoods.

Table 4. Changes in living conditions in Tallinn and Tartu

Changes in living conditions after the housing reform	Tallinn inhabitants 2006 (no of interviews 1334)	Tallinn, forced tenants 2006 (no of interviews 503)	Tartu inhabitants 1998 (no of interviews 1518)	Tartu, forced tenants 2007 (no of interviews 104)
Have worsened	6%	44%	23%	40%
Are the same	35%	46%	43%	41%
Have improved	49%	9%	32%	15%
Unanswered or cannot estimate	2%	1%	2%	4%

11. Neighbourhood's development is largely influenced by households' revenues (poor residents, little investments into the housing), social problems of the residents (unemployment, alcoholism or drug abuse, unsocial behavior, problems of mental health, see Randall, Brown, 1999), public and/or local policy (the share of housing policy expenditure in GNP is small in the Baltic countries) and the organization of social welfare. The latter directly affects the subsistence and social cohesion of single

elderly or disabled persons; indirectly this affects also the solution of many other problems. For example, the low level of home care (small number of customers) in the Baltic countries reduces chances of receiving information and help from the public sector in solving housing related problems.

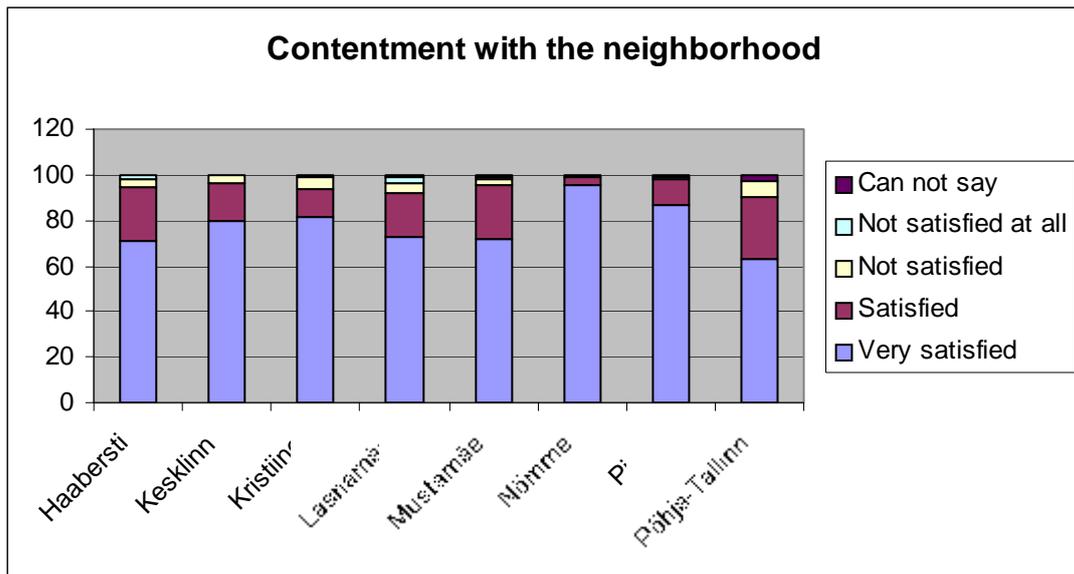
Table 5. Institutional care (+ service housing) and home services (%)

	under 65		over 65	
	institutions	home help	institutions	home help
Denmark	0,4	0,6	9,0	24,6
Estonia	0,4	0,1	2,0	2,2
Finland	0,4	0,8	6,8	10,7
Latvia	0,3	0,1	1,1	1,0
Lithuania	0,3	0,1	1,0	1,0
Norway	0,4	0,7	11,8	15,7
Sweden	0,3	0,2	8,6	8,2

Source: *Nordic/Baltic Social Protection Statistics 2000. 2003*

12. Past studies (Kährik, 2006, Ruoppila, 2006) suggest that by the end of the 1990s in the Estonian capital city Tallinn there had not shaped significant housing segregation (did not exist substantial socio-economic residential segregation or polarization between housing sub markets and larger spatial units). The studies by the author since the mid 2000s indicate that the situation has not significantly changed. Differences in contentment with the neighborhood in Tallinn are remarkable. Contentment is highest in private residential areas (Nõmme and Pirita), lowest in "socialist districts" (above all, in Lasnamäe, Mustamäe and Haabersti housings of mainly concrete panel blocs) as well as in the labor class districts of northern Tallinn built in the late 19th and first half of the 20th century. But the number of the unsatisfied residents with the neighborhood in all residential areas is substantially smaller compared with those who are satisfied.

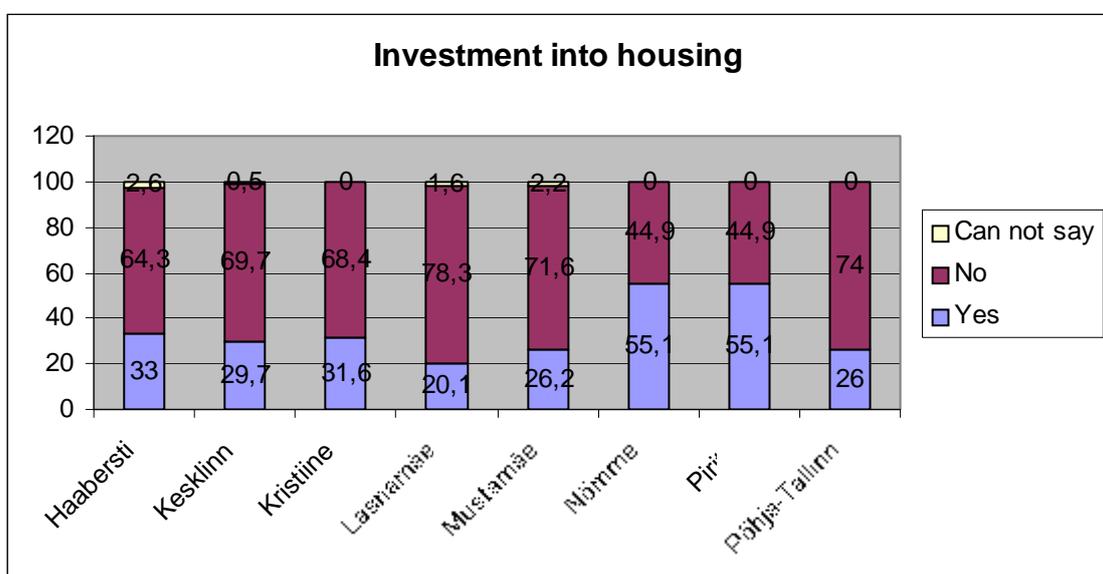
Figure 8. Contentment with the neighborhood (Tallinn, 2006, 1334 interviews)



Source: *Tallinna ja naaberomavalitsuste elamuvalade uuring. 2006. Vastutav täitja Jüri Kõre. Tallinna Linnavalitsus*

At the same time people in all neighborhoods have started to invest into their housing conditions in the past ten years. In private residential areas there are 2.5 times more such households than in large apartment blocks. While in the first group the pace of investment in 2006 fell significantly the in the second it rose. Different behavior of residents in different neighborhoods can be explained by differences in past living conditions and adaptation with new changes in socio-economic conditions.

Figure 9. Investments into housing (at least in the sum of 6-month income during the past 10 years, 1334 interviews)



Source: Tallinna ja naaberomavalitsuste elamualade uuring. 2006. Vastutav täitja Jüri Kõre. Tallinna Linnavalitsus

Table 6 . Participation in privatization in Tallinn in 2006, 1,334 interviews

	Estonian	Russian	Other	Total
Privatized my living space and am living on it	51.4%	71.4%	80.3%	61.2%
Privatized, but am not currently living on it	22.1%	18.6%	9.9%	20.0%
My living space did not belong to privatization	12,7%	3,8%	4,2%	8,6%
It was not privatized for other reasons	7,3%	2,3%	2,8%	5,0%
Cannot say	2,6%	1,0%	1,4%	1,9%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Summary

Housing reforms in the 1990s influenced the lives of millions of people in Western as well as Eastern Europe. In the West changes in the housing policy were one part in reforming the welfare state. Today the growth of market relations in housing has decreased or stopped in the West. In some countries there has been adopted a policy of increasing the role of the tenant sector. In the social policies of Central and Eastern European countries there have existed two parallel processes since the end of the 20th century. Building of the welfare state and its reorganization.

Despite differences in reform techniques the goals of housing reforms in the Baltic countries were the same: the creation of self-regulating housing sector based on private ownership. In evaluating the Estonian housing reform there can be seen more positive than negative results.

The studies do not confirm that the replacement of mechanisms based on solidarity by those based on market relations there is a simple direct link with such phenomena as

homelessness, spatial segregation, etc. In case of households living social living quarters as well as in case of those living in restituted living space we can speak of residualization as a phenomenon. But these two groups of living quarters (residents) form only a very small part of the total aggregate. As a whole today the homogeneity of society in the Baltic countries is socially and spatially still rather big.

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