



REPORT LAUNCH

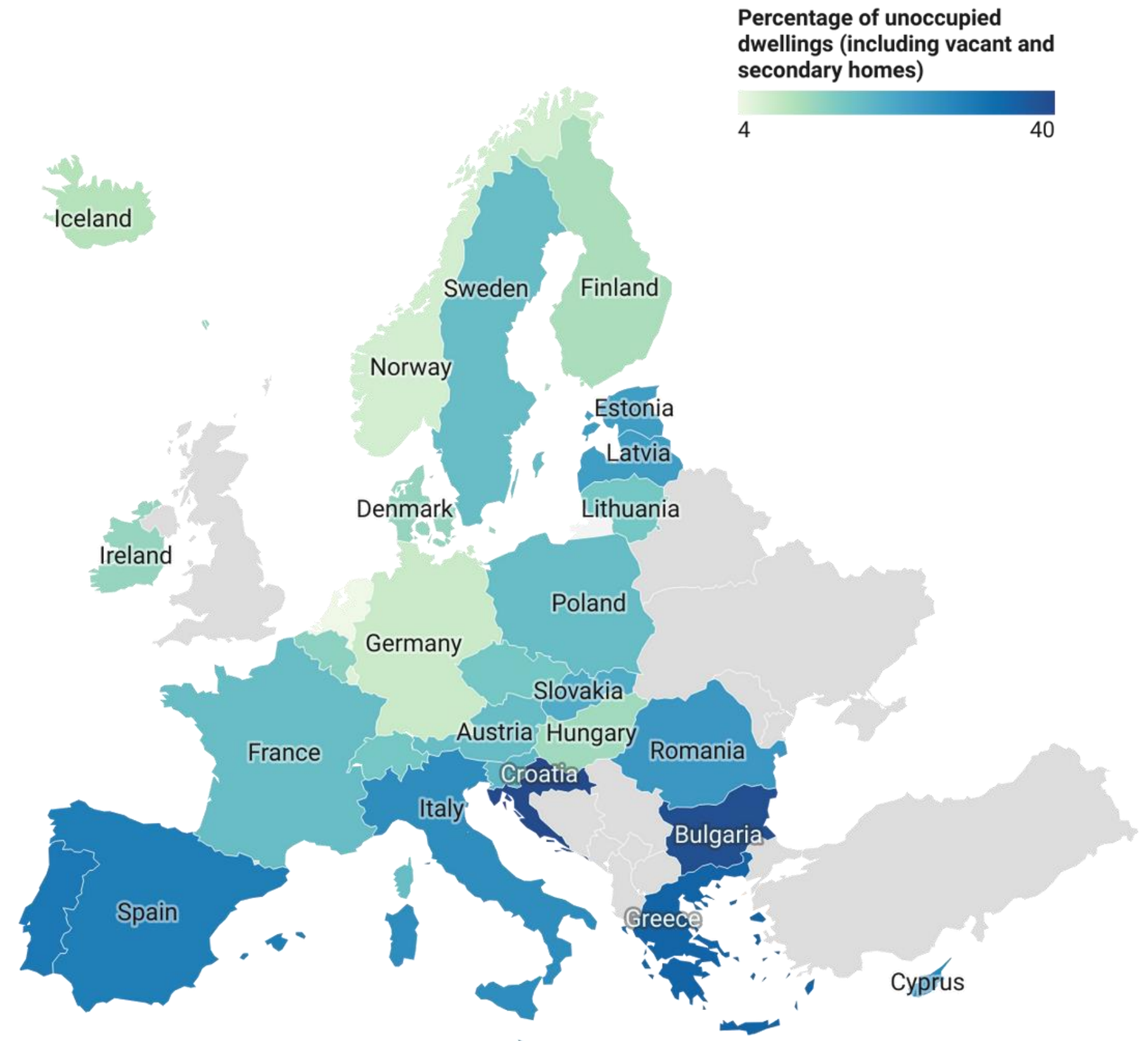
REPURPOSING VACANT SPACES TO CREATE HOUSING SOLUTIONS?

Charifa Mahamoud - May 2025

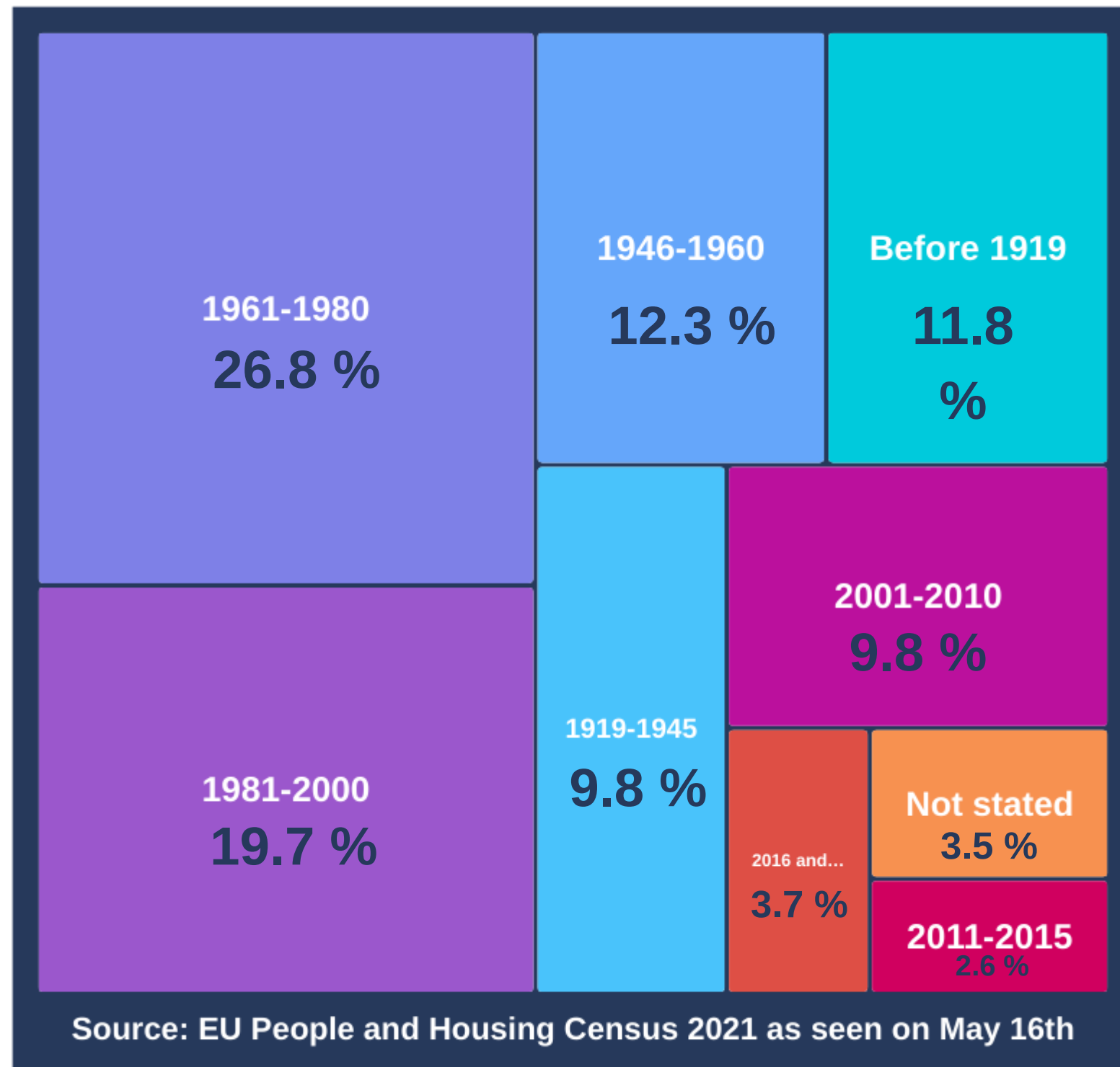


THE STATE OF RESIDENTIAL VACANCY

- **47.5M empty homes**, approx. **20%** of the existing housing stock
- **Countries with the highest vacancy rate:** Croatia (40,1%), Bulgaria (38,9%) and Greece (34,5%)
- **Average vacancy rate:** 19,6%



THE STATE OF RESIDENTIAL VACANCY



Among the unoccupied dwellings stock:

- 38% are in one-dwelling buildings
 - 10% are in two-dwelling buildings
 - 50% are in three or more dwelling buildings
 - 1% are in non-residential buildings
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- **About 80% of vacancies concern older buildings that would require retrofitting to meet modern standards.**
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- ⇒ **Dual opportunity :**
- addressing housing needs
 - addressing climate goals through energy-efficient renovations

WHAT DATA SAYS AND DOES NOT SAY

- “Unoccupied dwellings” encompasses unused dwellings **and** secondary homes
- **23% rise in EU vacancy** rates since 2011...
- ... but lack of usable vacancy registries.

Example of good practice: France's LOVAC database:

- Property owners declare occupancy on taxes filling website.
- Provides real-time occupancy data on a yearly basis.
- Includes energy efficiency labels (DPE) when available.
- Database accessible to local authorities that can accurately localize vacant properties on their territory

OTHER TYPES OF VACANCY

- **Office/Commercial:**
 - Grand Parade project in Ireland: Vacant office space converted into mixed use development.
- **Religious:**
 - Project Bethléem in Belgium: Repurposing church properties into affordable housing for vulnerable groups.
 - Llar Sant Joan de Déu de Manresa in Catalonia: Converting religious buildings into shelters and support hub for people experiencing homelessness
- **Public buildings:**
 - Haus Turmbergblick in Germany: Turning an unused clinic into affordable housing for people with low income or on welfare benefits

These projects highlight the importance of context-specific approaches, where solutions must be adapted to the unique characteristics of each building type and location.

KEY FACTORS IN ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS THROUGH VACANT BUILDINGS REUSE

| Factor | What needs to be considered? |
|------------------------------|---|
| Tenure type | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize long-term secure rentals over temporary solutions. |
| Legal frameworks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure legal security for tenants and clear responsibilities for owners. • Use occupancy agreements or public management rights to formalize reuse (<i>e.g., Brussels Region</i>) |
| Allocation mechanisms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparent and fair allocation procedures. • Needs-based and co-designed with local actors and social services. |
| Affordability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure rents are linked to income levels and aligned with local housing needs. • Consider long-term affordability via subsidies or social housing status. |
| Location | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target well-connected urban areas with proximity to transport, services and employment. • Support long-term integration and reduce social isolation. |
| Support services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate on-site or linked social support, especially for vulnerable populations (<i>e.g, Grand Parade (Focus Ireland) or Live and Work (Rocktrust)</i>) |

RECOMMENDATIONS



Better data tracking

Implement comprehensive vacancy registries and improve data tracking across the EU to identify suitable properties for repurposing.



Tailored solutions for local needs

Develop policies that reflect the unique needs of local populations and tailor vacancy strategies to regional challenges.



Financing for affordable conversions

Leverage existing funding sources to support the affordable conversion and retrofitting of vacant spaces, ensuring these projects contribute to both housing and sustainability goals.



Prioritize homeless households in allocation

Ensure that repurposed spaces are prioritized for people that need them the most, particularly homeless households, to directly address housing exclusion.

DELIVERABLES

RECLAIMING VACANT SPACES TO TACKLE HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS CRISES IN EUROPE



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A report highlighting **trends** and **key strategies** to **transform vacant spaces** into **sustainable housing solutions**.

Case studies from **9 projects** and **5 policies** across **12+ countries**

REPURPOSING VACANT SPACES INTO HOMES

COLLECTION OF BEST PRACTICES



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THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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