

Transformation of Panel Housing and Urban Resilience in Odesa

CBC Roundtable – 24 September 2025, online

Moderation: Dr. Barbara Engel (CBC, KIT)

Participants

Prof. Dr. Olga Savitskaya, Architectural and Art Institute, Odesa
Dr. Vladimir Sukhanov, Director, Ecstroy Center, Odesa
Knut Höller, Managing Director, Housing Initiative for Eastern Europe (IWO), Berlin
Dr. Olexander Grekov, Head of Urban Planning Cadastre Service, Odesa Municipality
Evgeny Malnev and Andrey Duda, Odessa Housing Union
Mykola Matyushenko, Chair, Association of Architects, Odesa

Topics and Questions

The roundtable focused on the challenges and opportunities of panel housing recovery and urban resilience in Odesa Mass Housing Estates. Participants explored the impacts of ongoing military destruction, structural vulnerabilities, and socio-political dynamics, aiming to identify practical solutions for sustainable, inclusive, and resilient housing strategies.

Discussion and Results

Historical Context and Housing Challenges

Panel housing in Odesa, constructed from the post-WWII period through the Khrushchev era, faces issues such as poor insulation, outdated infrastructure, and incremental unauthorized modifications. Historical planning decisions have shaped current vulnerabilities, highlighting the need to use crises as opportunities for adaptive urban development. Effective maintenance and coordinated housing management were emphasized as crucial to sustaining the existing housing stock and improving its performance under challenging conditions.

Resilience and Adaptation

Resilience in Ukraine's housing sector relies on adapting and progressing despite crises. Experience from Germany and Eastern Europe shows that refurbishment of large privatized estates is possible with professional management, robust legal frameworks, and targeted reforms. Key measures include strengthening administration and maintenance, providing financing adapted to homeowners, supporting energy-efficient technologies, and ensuring diversified housing provision, including municipal, social, and affordable rentals for displaced populations. Coordinated institutions and policies can turn reconstruction into a sustainable, inclusive, and climate-conscious housing system.

Practical Interventions and Policy

The discussion highlighted the integration of housing with social infrastructure and human-centered urban planning. Strengthening state and municipal institutions, professionalized administration, and comprehensive financing mechanisms are necessary to ensure that housing systems are resilient, inclusive, and capable of long-term improvement. Crises were identified as catalysts for structural reform, providing opportunities to implement systemic changes.

Conclusions

Odessa's panel housing sector requires a holistic approach combining professionalized management, energy-efficient modernization, social inclusion, and institutional support. Leveraging crises as opportunities for structural reform can enable the city to establish a resilient, sustainable, and inclusive housing system, offering a model for other Ukrainian cities.