



GUIDELINES FOR MOBILE STUDENTS ON HOUSING



These Guidelines were created in the framework of the Erasmus+ Key Action 2 project:
Home of Mobile Europeans - HOME Squared: KA220-HED-3DA46644.
Project Acronym: HOME2

Project Coordinator: Politecnico di Milano

Project Beneficiaries: the Erasmus Student Network, the European University Foundation,
the University of Oviedo, the International Union of Property Owners (UIPI) and Housing
Anywhere.

Brussels, December 2024 © The HOME Squared Consortium

Design:

Diana Simeria

Photos & Illustrations:

Canva, Storyset

Authors:

Sabri Ben Rommane

Acknowledgements:

We thank

Maria Teresa Gullace (Politecnico di Milano) for their feedback.

&

the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) for the layout of the publication.

INDEX

INDEX	
Introduction	5
Purpose of the Guidelines	6
Scope of the Guidelines	7
About HOME Squared	8
Section 1: Overview of HOME Quality Labels (QLs)	
1.1 The Labels	10
International Friendliness	10
Room Quality	10
Supersecure	11
Premium Accommodation	11
Well-equipped Kitchen	11
Well-equipped Laundry	11
Wheelchair Accessible	11
1.2 The foundation of the Labels: the Digital Data Standard	13
Key Features of the Digital Data Standard	13
Benefits of the Digital Data Standard	14
Section 2: Proposed New Quality Label on Inclusion and Sustainability	
2.1 Rationale for the New Quality Labels	16
2.2 Definition and Criteria of the Inclusion and Sustainability Quality Labels	17
2.2.1 Inclusion Quality Label:	17
2.2.2 Sustainability Quality Label:	18
2.3 Benefits of the Inclusion and Sustainability Quality Labels	20
Section 3: Data-backed guidelines for implementing the Quality Labels	
3.1 Data Collection and Analysis Methodology	24
3.2 Key Findings from the Student Survey on Housing Situations	26

Section 4: Recommendations for Using QLs in Student Housing Contracts	30
4.1 Overview of a Typical Student Housing Contract	30
4.2 Integration of Quality Labels in Housing Contracts	32
4.3 Specific recommendations to protect students	35
Section 5: Guidelines for Mobile Students	39
5.1 Understanding the type of European housing offers	39
University-provided housing	39
Private rentals	39
Specialised student housing providers	40
Short-term accommodation	40
5.2 How can students use the HOME quality labels in practice	41
Applying the Labels in the housing search	42
Ensuring compliance	42
Benefits of using Quality Labels	43
5.3 Housing Glossary	44
5.4 Tips for finding accommodation abroad	47
Early preparation tips	47
Tips for research and using resources	47
Verification and visits tips	48
Tips on lease and legal considerations	48
Organisational tips and arrival planning	49
Annex	51
Annex A: Break-out fact sheets on inclusion and housing contractual aspects	51
A.1. Fact Sheet on Inclusion	51
A.2. Fact sheet on sustainability	54
A.3. Fact sheet on housing contractual aspects for different student populations	56
Annex B: Students survey results	59
Annex C: Shortened and more accessible version of the Guidelines for external usage	59
References	60

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Guidelines

The primary purpose of these guidelines is to provide essential information and practical advice on securing quality housing during the international studies of European students.

The guidelines aim to:

- **Empower students:** Equip students with the knowledge needed to identify and select safe, inclusive, and high-quality housing options.
- **Promote transparency:** Increase transparency in the student housing market by explaining the HOME Quality Labels and how they help in assessing accommodation standards.
- **Enhance awareness:** Raise awareness of the different housing options available across Europe, including university-provided and private accommodations.
- **Facilitate informed decision-making:** Provide a housing glossary and practical tips to help students make informed decisions and avoid common pitfalls in the housing search process.
- **Support successful integration:** Assist students in navigating cultural and logistical challenges associated with living abroad, contributing to a positive and enriching international experience.

By addressing these objectives, the guidelines aim to support mobile students in finding and securing appropriate accommodation, thereby enhancing their overall study abroad experience.



Scope of the Guidelines

The scope of these guidelines encompasses a comprehensive approach to assist mobile European students in navigating the complex landscape of student housing. Specifically, the guidelines aim to:

- **Clarify the European housing offer:** Provide an overview of the housing options available to students across Europe, highlighting the variety, availability, and quality of accommodations.
- **Promote the use of Quality Labels:** Explain the purpose and criteria of the HOME Quality Labels (QLs), and how they can be used to identify and select high-quality, inclusive, and sustainable student housing.
- **Facilitate understanding with a Housing Glossary:** Offer a glossary of common terms and definitions related to student housing to help students understand key concepts and terminologies.
- **Provide practical tips for finding accommodation abroad:** Share insights and practical advice for students seeking accommodation in foreign countries, ensuring they are well-equipped to secure safe and suitable housing.

By addressing these areas, the guidelines are designed to empower mobile students with the knowledge and tools necessary to make informed decisions about their housing options, ensuring a smoother and more successful international study experience.



About HOME Squared

Accommodation remains a key hurdle for international mobility, spotlighted by the **HousErasmus+ research**, from which the HOME story started. In response, the original HOME (*Home of Mobile Europeans*) project, funded by the Erasmus+ programme, aimed to provide accessible and quality housing options for mobile European students.

The HOME project ran from **2019 to 2022** and fostered collaboration among universities, students, and student housing providers. The initiative sought to enhance transparency and information sharing about student accommodation at the European level.

Building on the success of HOME, we proudly present **HOME²**! Launched in **December 2023**, HOME² is a 30-month initiative dedicated to revolutionising student housing experiences across Europe. HOME² will deliver impactful outcomes, including updated student housing quality labels, policy recommendations, and an improved user-friendly housing solution to allow mobile students to find quality accommodation via the Erasmus+ App.

HOME², coordinated by **Politecnico di Milano**, addresses the complexities of both university-provided and private accommodations. The partners, who bring unique expertise to the project, are the **Erasmus Student Network**, the **European University Foundation**, the **University of Oviedo**, the **International Union of Property Owners (UIPI)**, and **Housing Anywhere**.



SECTION 1

Overview of HOME Quality
Labels (QLs)

1.1 The Labels

The **HOME Quality Labels (QLs)** are an innovative set of standards developed to help mobile European students easily identify and select high-quality housing options. These labels serve as a guarantee that certain accommodations meet specific criteria, ensuring a safe, comfortable, and enriching living experience for students studying abroad. Each Quality Label focuses on different aspects of accommodation quality, addressing various needs and preferences of international students. Below is an explanation of each label and its significance.

International Friendliness

The *International Friendliness label* is designed to highlight accommodations that cater specifically to the **needs of international students**. This label ensures that the housing is not only welcoming but also well-equipped to support students from different countries. Accommodations with this label offer essential amenities such as reliable Wi-Fi, a comfortable bed, and a desk for studying. They also provide **short-term contracts** and the ability to **book online**, making the process convenient for students planning their stay from abroad. Moreover, these accommodations ensure that important documents like the housing contract are **available in English** and that communication with the provider can be conducted in English. This label also indicates that **international guarantors** are accepted, which is a significant advantage for students who might not have local financial backing.

Room Quality

The *Room Quality label* signifies that the **accommodation is well-furnished** and provides a comfortable living space. This label ensures that students have access to essential items that make their stay pleasant, such as bed linen, pillows, duvets, bath towels, a desk, a chair, and ample storage space. Accommodations that earn this label have been carefully assessed to ensure they offer a homely and functional environment where students can live and study effectively.

Supersecure

Safety is a top priority for students living abroad, and the *Supersecure label* is awarded to accommodations that go above and beyond in providing **security features**. This label ensures that students feel safe in their housing, knowing that their room has a lock and the building is monitored through either 24-hour concierge services or video surveillance. Such features help create a secure living environment, giving students and their families peace of mind.

Premium Accommodation

The *Premium Accommodation label* highlights housing options that offer **exclusive and superior features**, providing a **luxurious living experience**. Accommodations with this label might include sports facilities, a pool, a game room, and cleaning services, in addition to enhanced security measures. This label is ideal for students who are looking for high-end living spaces that offer additional comfort and recreational opportunities.

Well-equipped Kitchen

For students who enjoy cooking or require specific kitchen amenities, the *Well-equipped Kitchen label* identifies accommodations with **superior kitchen facilities**. Housing with this label ensures that students have access to a stove, oven, and at least two additional appliances such as a microwave, dishwasher, or essential kitchenware. This label guarantees that the kitchen is well-suited for preparing a variety of meals, catering to the dietary needs and preferences of international students.

Well-equipped Laundry

The *Well-equipped Laundry label* is awarded to accommodations that provide excellent laundry facilities, which is an important consideration for many students. To earn this label, housing must include a washing machine and at least two additional laundry conveniences such as an iron, ironing board, or drying rack/dryer. This ensures that students have the necessary amenities to manage their laundry efficiently and conveniently.

Wheelchair Accessible

Accessibility is crucial for students with reduced mobility, and the *Wheelchair Accessible label* signifies that the **accommodation is fully accessible for wheelchair users**. Housing with this label ensures that all facilities and amenities are designed to be easily accessible, providing a comfortable and independent living experience for students with mobility challenges.

The **HOME Quality Labels** make it easier for students to identify and choose accommodations that meet their specific needs and standards, enhancing their overall study abroad experience. By relying on these labels, students can confidently select housing that guarantees comfort, safety, and inclusivity.



1.2 The foundation of the Labels: the Digital Data Standard

The HOME Quality Labels are underpinned by the **HOME Digital Data Standard**, a comprehensive **framework designed to standardise the sharing of student housing data across Europe**. This digital standard ensures that housing providers and intermediaries can seamlessly publish their listings on the HOME platform and the Erasmus+ App, thereby facilitating easier access to quality housing options for mobile students.

The HOME Digital Data Standard provides a uniform way to describe and share information about student housing. It is a **technical specification document** that guides the creation of JSON feeds, enabling housing providers to publish their listings consistently and accurately. By adhering to this standard, providers can ensure that their housing offers meet the criteria set by the HOME consortium and are easily accessible to students via the Erasmus+ App.

This standard was developed collaboratively within the HOME project after conducting extensive research and consultations with large housing providers and student housing specialists to create a comprehensive and practical standard.

Key Features of the Digital Data Standard

The HOME Digital Data Standard includes a **detailed set of data fields** that describe various aspects of housing listings, such as **address, availability, price, and specific quality indicators**. These fields are carefully mapped and standardised to ensure consistency and completeness across different housing platforms. Feedback from student housing providers was integral in refining these data fields to ensure they are both practical and comprehensive.

The standard also outlines the process for housing providers to upload their listings to the HOME platform. These listings are reviewed and updated daily to ensure that all information is current and accurate. The system automatically adds new listings, updates existing ones, and removes listings that are no longer available, ensuring that students always have access to the most up-to-date information.

The data fields specified in the HOME Digital Data Standard are directly **linked to the criteria for the various HOME Quality Labels**. Each label, such as *International Friendliness*, *Room Quality*, and *Supersecure*, has specific requirements that are represented within the data fields. For instance, a listing with the International Friendliness label must include mandatory features like Wi-Fi, a bed, and a desk, which are defined within the standard.

By adhering to the Digital Data Standard, housing providers ensure that their listings can be accurately evaluated and labelled according to the HOME Quality Labels. This not only enhances the visibility and credibility of their listings but also provides students with a reliable way to identify accommodations that meet their needs and expectations.

Benefits of the Digital Data Standard

The **primary benefit** of the HOME Digital Data Standard is the **creation of a consistent, transparent, and reliable housing market for mobile students**. It simplifies the process for housing providers to share their listings and for students to find suitable accommodations. The standardisation of data fields ensures that all listings are presented uniformly, making it easier for students to compare different housing options.

Furthermore, the integration of quality labels into the digital data standard enhances the overall quality of student housing. Students can trust that accommodations with HOME Quality Labels meet high standards of safety, comfort, and inclusivity, thereby improving their overall study abroad experience.

SECTION 2

Proposed New Quality
Label on Inclusion and
Sustainability

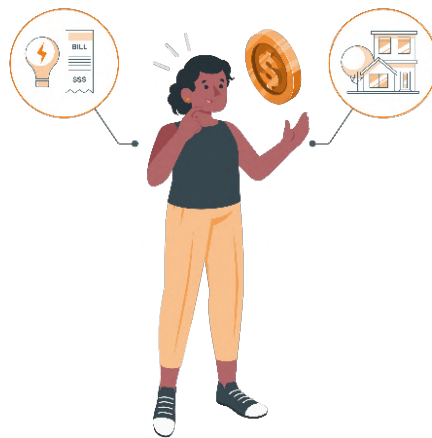
2.1 Rationale for the new Quality Labels

The development of new Quality Labels on inclusion and sustainability stems from the **insights** gathered during the **online focus groups** conducted with students and stakeholders. These sessions highlighted critical challenges and opportunities in student housing, leading to the proposal of Quality Labels that address key concerns such as **affordability, non-discrimination, and universal design**.

Key findings from the focus groups:

- **Affordability:** Recognised as the top priority, ensuring accommodations are financially accessible to students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.
- **Non-discrimination policies:** Essential for creating a supportive and respectful community atmosphere, and safeguarding students' rights.
- **Universal design:** Crucial for physically accessible accommodations that cater to students of all abilities.

These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of inclusivity in student housing and the need for comprehensive strategies that address various dimensions of accessibility and equity. The integration of sustainability aspects further aligns with broader environmental goals, promoting eco-friendly and resource-efficient living environments.



2.2 Definition and criteria of the Inclusion and Sustainability Quality Labels

2.2.1 Inclusion Quality Label:

The *Inclusion Quality Label* would be designed to identify housing that meets **high standards of inclusivity**, ensuring that all students, regardless of background or ability, can access and thrive in their living environments.

Criteria:

- **Affordability measures:** Housing must be priced within a range accessible to students from varied economic backgrounds, potentially offering tiered pricing or financial aid options.
- **Non-discrimination policies:** Explicit policies must be in place to prevent discrimination based on ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, sexuality or any other factors ensuring a welcoming and respectful environment.
- **Universal design:** Facilities must be designed or adapted to be accessible to all students, including those with physical disabilities. This includes features like ramps, elevators, wide doorways, and accessible bathrooms.
- **Community engagement:** Efforts to foster a sense of belonging through community-building activities and support services.

The criteria identified above present several **challenges:**

For **affordability**, this can be relative based on the **country and the cost of living**, making it difficult to establish a universal price range. Companies might find it imbalanced to declare a certain price range as unacceptable. Instead, it would be more effective to contribute to **cost transparency** by clearly outlining all costs and services. Additionally, showcasing the average price in the city for similar housing or in general would help provide a clearer picture of affordability.

Regarding **non-discrimination policies**, tracking discrimination can be challenging since it is often subtle or hidden. The best approach would be to include a **mention of non-discrimination policies in the rental contract**. Implementing feedback mechanisms could also be beneficial, but it would be essential to explore how these systems could be designed to support both tenants and housing providers effectively.

The challenge for **universally accessible** designs is that there are various types of disabilities. A facility might be accessible for some disabilities but not for others. Therefore, **addressing the most common disabilities** within the Digital Data Standard of the label would be a practical starting point. This would be the minimum viable product, which could be improved over time to include more detailed information on the types of disabilities that the accessible elements of the accommodation cater to.

2.2.2. Sustainability Quality Label:

The *Sustainability Quality Label* would aim to recognise **housing that prioritises environmental sustainability**, contributing to the reduction of the environmental footprint of student accommodations. This good practice would have positive repercussions even for other types of accommodation with the case of HOME Squared acting as a valuable case study.

Criteria:

- **Energy efficiency:** Use of energy-efficient appliances and systems, adherence to green building standards, and implementation of renewable energy sources.
- **Waste management:** Effective waste reduction and recycling programs, including composting and proper disposal of hazardous materials.
- **Water conservation:** Installation of water-saving fixtures and systems to reduce water consumption.
- **Eco-friendly materials:** Use of sustainable, non-toxic building materials and furnishings.

As with the proposed Inclusion Quality Label, the criteria identified above for the Sustainability Quality Label present a number of **challenges**:

First, for **energy efficiency**, implementing energy-efficient appliances and systems, adhering to green building standards, and utilising renewable energy sources can be complex and foresee

expenses. Housing providers may need to put forward initial investments and address **logistical challenges**. A practical approach would be to gradually integrate these features, starting with the most **impactful and cost-effective options**. Clear guidelines and support for transitioning to energy-efficient solutions would also be beneficial. For the scope of the HOME2 labels, this might mean starting by allowing housing providers to meet this criterion in the cases where they can provide information like the energy consumption of the accommodation and the presence of energy-saving solutions in the accommodation like automated boilers, thus contributing to increasing awareness about the sustainability of the offer. The threshold to meet this criterion can also be made more accessible with a vision of strategically scoping it up in the future.

In terms of **waste management**, establishing effective **waste reduction and recycling programs**, including composting and the proper disposal of waste, requires ongoing commitment and education. Ensuring that all residents participate in these programs can be challenging. Providing **easy-to-follow instructions**, along with regular monitoring and feedback, can help foster a culture of sustainability within the housing community. As with the criteria of energy efficiency, the threshold of this component of the label could be met by at least providing instructions to the tenants about recycling rules and regulations in the accommodation and in the city which the tenants can easily access and follow. If the housing also has services and infrastructures to facilitate waste management this would be a plus and the ideal threshold.

Water conservation is another critical area. The installation of water-saving fixtures and systems to reduce water consumption may involve significant retrofitting efforts. Encouraging residents to adopt **water-saving habits** is also essential. The provision of user-friendly, efficient fixtures can facilitate this process. This can be as simple as noting in the housing offer and within the Data Standard that the accommodation has systems like consumption-reduction water filters for taps and other similar solutions.

Finally, the use of **eco-friendly materials** involves **sourcing sustainable, non-toxic building materials and furnishings**. This may pose challenges related to availability and cost. Establishing strong relationships with suppliers of eco-friendly materials and prioritising these options during renovations and new constructions can help overcome these challenges. Providing information on the health and environmental benefits of using sustainable materials can also encourage wider adoption. To start meeting the threshold, the housing provider could simply share the year of renovation of the inhabitation within the DDS and declare whether the accommodation meets national or local renovation standards and requirements.

2.3 Benefits of the Inclusion and Sustainability Quality Labels

In subsection 2.2 above we defined and tackled the criteria and challenges of the proposed *Quality Labels on Inclusion and Sustainability* respectively. In this subsection, we will share a brief overview of what the operational benefits of establishing these two Labels would be.

Benefits for students:

- **Enhanced accessibility and equality:** Ensures all students have equal access to quality housing, promoting a more inclusive educational experience.
- **Improved living conditions:** Provides safer, more comfortable, and well-equipped living environments, enhancing overall student well-being.
- **Cost savings:** Affordability measures and energy-efficient facilities can lead to significant cost savings for students.
- **Positive community atmosphere:** Fosters a supportive and engaged student community, reducing feelings of isolation and improving social integration.

Benefits for housing providers:

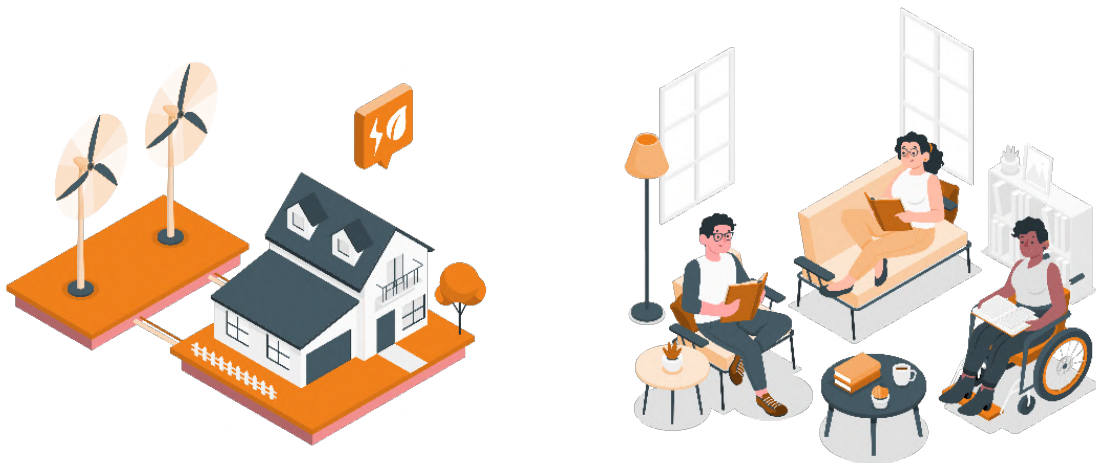
- **Increased appeal:** Housing that meets these high standards is likely to attract a broader and more diverse student population.
- **Reputation enhancement:** Providers can enhance their reputation by demonstrating a commitment to inclusivity and sustainability, potentially leading to increased demand and occupancy rates.
- **Compliance with regulations:** Aligning with inclusion and sustainability criteria can help providers comply with current and future regulatory requirements.

Benefits for universities and stakeholders:

- **Support for institutional goals:** Aligns with broader educational and social goals of promoting diversity, equity, and sustainability.
- **Enhanced student satisfaction:** Contributes to higher student satisfaction and retention rates, reflecting positively on the institution's reputation.

- **Community and environmental impact:** Positively impacts the wider community and environment, aligning with corporate social responsibility and sustainability initiatives.

By implementing these new Quality Labels, the HOME initiative aims to create a more inclusive and sustainable housing landscape for mobile European students, enhancing their overall study abroad. While this Guidebook provides a strategic foundation for these Labels the following steps will be the translation of these Labels within an updated HOME Squared Digital Data Standard translating as a final step into the two new quality labels within the HOME Squared solution.



SECTION 3

Data-backed guidelines
for implementing the
Quality Labels

Apart from the insights deriving from the focus groups with students outlined in section 2 above, the HOME Squared consortium also worked to strengthen the foundation of the proposed labels with a data-backed approach through **housing surveys for students, housing providers** (private and companies), and **higher education institutions**. Below we outline the relevance of the survey for students concerning the establishment of the two new quality labels by sharing the preliminary results (Dias R. et. al., 2024). The survey report will be available in full on www.thehomeproject.eu.



3.1 Data collection and analysis methodology

The data for this section was collected through a comprehensive **survey** carried out by the **Erasmus Student Network (ESN)** as part of the **HOME²** project, under **Work Package 2 (WP2)**. The survey aimed to capture a holistic view of the student housing landscape across Europe, with particular attention to *quality, affordability, inclusion, and sustainability*. It was designed to support evidence-based policy development and help shape guidelines for the **new Inclusion and Sustainability Quality Labels**.

The survey **targeted students who participated in mobility programs** such as Erasmus+, with a specific focus on those experiencing housing challenges. The participants were recruited through a combination of ESN networks, social media platforms, and collaboration with higher education institutions (HEIs). The survey was **distributed digitally** across various channels to ensure broad participation from students of diverse nationalities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and academic levels.

A total of **5.7K students** responded to the survey. The survey was structured to accommodate a broad range of participants, including students from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. While the largest group of respondents came from EU countries (70%), a significant portion also hailed from non-EU regions, reflecting the increasing global participation in European mobility programs. This diversity provides a comprehensive data set for understanding different housing needs and challenges faced by students.

The survey comprised 41 questions that explored four key areas:

- **Demographic and mobility data:** This section collected information on student nationality, academic background, and mobility experience, including the type of mobility program and host country.
- **Housing experience:** Participants were asked about the quality, affordability, and availability of their accommodation, as well as satisfaction levels and factors influencing their housing choices.

- **Housing challenges:** This section focused on the barriers students faced, including affordability, availability, and specific issues like discrimination or scams.
- **Support from institutions:** Students were asked about the level of support they received from their HEIs in finding accommodation, as well as any digital tools that could have improved their experience.

Quantitative methods were used to analyse the survey data. **Descriptive statistics** were applied to summarise key findings, while comparative analyses explored variations based on *nationality, socioeconomic background, and the status of vulnerable students*. A multi-variable analysis allowed the research team to correlate students' housing experiences with other factors, such as the type of accommodation and the support received from their institution.

Data was cleaned to manage incomplete responses, ensuring that only reliable information was used for decision-making. To minimise the impact of response bias and geographical disparities, the research team applied weighting techniques based on country response rates and participant demographics.

Several limitations were noted during the data collection process:

- The survey was promoted primarily through ESN networks, leading to higher response rates in countries with robust ESN presence (e.g., Germany, Spain, Italy). This may have skewed the data and impacted its generalisability.
- As with any self-reported data, there is the potential for response bias, as students' perceptions of their housing experience may be subjective.
- The survey aimed to represent students from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, but responses from these students were uneven across countries, which may affect the representativeness of this subgroup.

Despite these limitations, the survey offers valuable insights into student housing across Europe and serves as a solid foundation for the proposed Quality Labels.

3.2 Key findings from the student survey on housing situations

The student housing survey provides a wealth of data that highlights the critical challenges and needs faced by mobile students, particularly in terms of inclusion, sustainability, and overall accommodation quality. The following findings are instrumental in informing the development of the new Inclusion and Sustainability Quality Labels:

1. Affordability and availability of housing: The majority of students reported that the cost of housing was their most significant challenge during their mobility experience. According to the survey, over **60% of students considered affordability a critical factor when choosing accommodation**, with many indicating that they spent more than **30% of their monthly budget on rent alone**. This issue was exacerbated in popular mobility destinations such as **Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands**, where housing supply is low and prices are high.

Moreover, around **40%** of students reported that they were unable to secure housing until just days before their arrival, increasing their stress and anxiety. For some, this led to the use of **temporary housing** (e.g., hostels or short-term rentals), further adding to the financial burden.

These findings underscore the need for the Inclusion Quality Label to prioritise affordability and accessibility in student accommodations, ensuring that students from diverse backgrounds have equal opportunities to secure housing that meets their needs.

2. Housing quality and inclusivity: The survey highlighted significant disparities in housing quality across Europe, with many students reporting that their accommodation lacked basic amenities or failed to meet the standards promised. More than **20% of respondents noted that their housing did not match the advertised description**, with issues ranging from inadequate furnishings to poor maintenance.

In terms of inclusivity, students from minority groups were more likely to experience discrimination during their housing search. Approximately **10% of respondents** indicated that

they **faced barriers due to their identity**, with some students reporting that landlords or housing providers refused to rent to them based on these factors. Additionally, students with disabilities struggled to find accessible housing, with **only 5% of respondents indicating that their accommodation was fully wheelchair accessible**.

The Inclusion Quality Label will address these challenges by incorporating strict non-discrimination policies and universal design standards. Accommodations must demonstrate their commitment to creating an inclusive and supportive environment for all students, regardless of their background or physical abilities.

3. Sustainability and environmental impact: Sustainability was another key concern among students. According to the survey, nearly **40% of respondents expressed a desire for accommodations that prioritise energy efficiency and environmentally friendly practices**. However, less than 15% reported that their accommodation had any significant sustainability features, such as energy-efficient appliances or recycling programs.

Students also highlighted the lack of awareness and resources around sustainable living. Many indicated that they were unsure of how to reduce their environmental footprint while living in their temporary accommodation, and few reported receiving any guidance from their housing providers on sustainable practices.

The Sustainability Quality Label will focus on the promotion of eco-friendly housing that incorporates energy-efficient systems, waste management programs, and water conservation measures. By raising awareness and encouraging housing providers to adopt sustainable practices, the label will help reduce the environmental impact of student accommodations.

4. Support from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs): The survey revealed a wide disparity in the levels of support that the students have received from their HEIs when searching for housing. While some institutions provided comprehensive assistance, including access to verified housing providers and digital tools for booking accommodation, others offered little to no support, leaving students to navigate the complex housing market on their own.

Nearly **30% of students reported that they received no assistance from their HEI**, and **22% indicated that they did not even know support was available**. This lack of institutional engagement contributed to the challenges many students faced in securing housing and underscores the importance of improving communication and support services.

The development of the Inclusion and Sustainability Quality Labels will encourage HEIs to take a more active role in supporting their students, ensuring that they have access to reliable and affordable accommodation options. Furthermore, the labels will promote the use of digital tools to streamline the housing search process and provide students with the information they need to make informed decisions.



SECTION 4

Recommendations for
Using QLs in Student
Housing Contracts

4.1 Overview of a typical student housing contract

A typical student housing contract is a legally binding document that outlines the terms and conditions of the rental agreement between the student (*tenant*) and the housing provider (*landlord*). Understanding the components of this contract is crucial for students to ensure they are aware of their rights and responsibilities. Below is an overview of the key elements typically found in a student housing contract:

Parties involved

The contract should clearly state the **names and contact information of both the tenant and the landlord**. This section identifies who is entering into the agreement and ensures that both parties are clearly recognised.

Property details

This section provides a **detailed description of the rental property**, including the address, type of accommodation (*e.g., apartment, dormitory, shared house*), and any specific room or unit numbers. It may also include information about shared spaces and amenities available to the tenant.

Term of the tenancy

The contract must specify **the start and end dates of the tenancy**. It should also outline any conditions related to renewing or extending the contract, as well as the procedures for early termination by either party.

Rent and payment terms

This crucial section outlines the **rent amount, payment frequency** (*e.g., monthly, quarterly*), and the **due date** for each payment. It should also specify acceptable payment methods and any late payment penalties or fees. Additionally, information on any required deposits, such as a security deposit, should be included, detailing the amount, purpose, and conditions for its return.

Maintenance and repairs

Responsibilities for maintenance and repairs should be clearly outlined. This section should specify **what the tenant is responsible for** (e.g., *minor repairs, maintaining cleanliness*) and **what the landlord is obligated to address** (e.g., *major repairs, structural issues*). Procedures for reporting and handling repairs should also be included.

Rules and regulations

This section covers the rules and regulations governing the use of the property. It may include *guidelines on noise levels, guest policies, smoking, pets, and the use of communal areas*. Adhering to these rules is typically a condition of the tenancy.

Insurance and liability

The contract should address **insurance requirements**, indicating whether the landlord or tenant is responsible for insuring the property and its contents. It may also outline **liability for damage or loss**, specifying the responsibilities of each party.

Termination conditions

Conditions under which the contract can be terminated early by either party should be detailed. This includes *notice periods, acceptable reasons for termination, and any associated fees or penalties*.

Legal rights and dispute resolution

The contract should inform tenants of their legal rights and provide information on how to resolve disputes. This may include *procedures for mediation, arbitration, or involving local housing authorities or courts*.

Signatures

The contract must be **signed and dated by both the tenant and the landlord** to be legally binding. Each party should receive a copy of the signed agreement for their records.

Understanding these elements of a typical student housing contract not only helps students to navigate their rental agreements confidently ensuring that they are aware of their obligations and protections under the law. This information can also be useful for the development of contract templates that in the future can help harmonise rental contracts in Europe by organically becoming a good shared practice. This is especially important for international students who might be even less aware of the regulation of rental contracts in the host country or more simply have difficulty understanding the language, in which case the HOME Squared's label on International Friendliness comes into play when housing providers foresee contracts in English or translations.

4.2 Integration of Quality Labels in housing contracts

The integration of Quality Labels into student housing contracts is an important step in ensuring that accommodations meet established standards for quality, inclusivity, and sustainability. The HOME Quality Labels serve as a mark of assurance that certain criteria have been met, providing students with confidence in their housing choices. Here is an overview of how Quality Labels can be effectively incorporated into housing contracts.

Evidence of compliance

The contract should include **a section that provides evidence of compliance with the Quality Label criteria**. This might involve certification documents, inspection reports, or other forms of verification. This evidence assures tenants that the property has been assessed and meets the required standards.

Responsibilities of the housing providers

This section should outline the landlord's responsibilities in maintaining the standards associated with each Quality Label. This information should allow tenants to assess **how the providers commit to retaining the labels**, such as *regular maintenance*, *adherence to non-discrimination policies*, and *continuous implementation of sustainability practices*. This ensures that the quality and standards are upheld throughout the tenancy. Providers can also do the comparison between their offer and the Quality Label and in case of doubts liaising with the HOME solution's onboarding team would be facilitated.

Rights and benefits for tenants

The contract should clearly state the rights and benefits that tenants gain from living in the property and these should be aligned with the HOME Quality Labels. This may include **access to specific amenities, guaranteed levels of service, and participation in sustainability programs**. By defining these rights, tenants can compare the contractual offer with the HOME Quality Labels.

Monitoring and reporting

Clear procedures for tenants to report any issues related to Quality Label criteria should also be included, ensuring that any deviations are promptly addressed.

Tenant acknowledgment

Finally, the contract should include a section for tenant acknowledgment. By signing this section, this acknowledgment helps **ensure that tenants are fully informed about the standards and benefits of their accommodation** which they can then compare with the HOME Quality Labels.

Opportunities and challenges in aligning rental contracts with Quality Labels standards

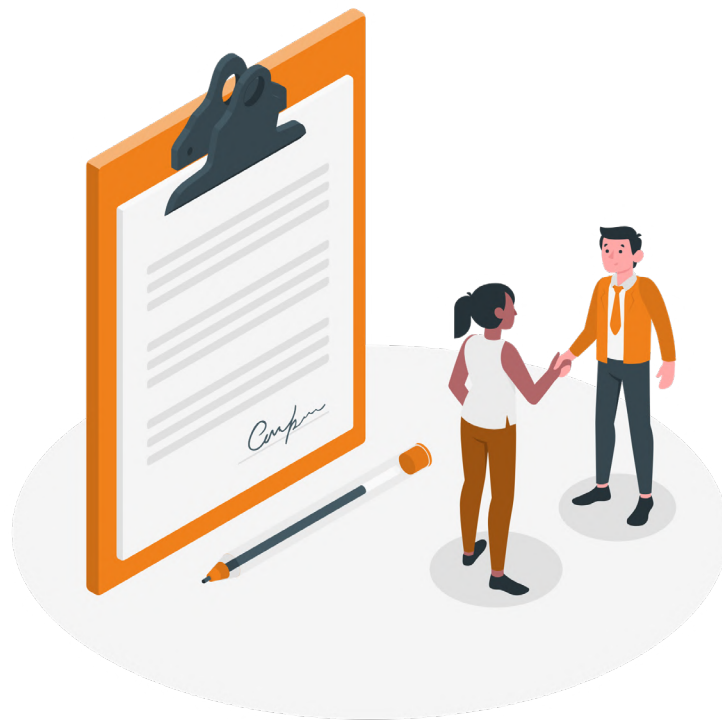
Integrating Quality Labels into housing contracts not only **enhances transparency and trust between landlords and tenants** but also **promotes higher standards of living in student accommodations**. Although Quality Labels cannot be explicitly mandated in contracts due to their association with the Digital Data Standard (DDS), the principles and criteria underlying these labels can still be embedded within the contractual information. This alignment ensures that students benefit from the quality standards without the need for direct access to the DDS.

Housing providers can reflect the essence of Quality Labels by incorporating relevant details and commitments into the contracts. For instance, **contracts can include sections on affordability, non-discrimination policies, accessibility features, energy efficiency, waste management, and other sustainability practices**. By detailing these aspects, providers can effectively communicate the value of their housing options to prospective tenants, emphasizing the benefits that align with the Quality Labels.

This approach also offers practical advantages. By including information that aligns with Quality Label criteria, housing contracts become more transparent and informative. Tenants can clearly understand the quality standards they can expect, such as the specific amenities, safety features, and sustainability measures in place. This transparency not only helps students make informed decisions but also enhances their confidence in the housing provider's commitment to quality.

Moreover, embedding these details in contracts facilitates smoother communication and verification processes between housing providers and the HOME onboarding team. In cases where there is a need for liaison or verification, having contractual information that traces back to Quality Label criteria simplifies the process. The HOME onboarding team can easily cross-reference the contract details with the DDS, ensuring that the housing meets the required standards without extensive additional documentation.

Promoting the integration of Quality Label principles as an added value, rather than a pre-condition, allows for flexibility while still upholding high standards. Housing providers can highlight their adherence to these principles as a competitive advantage, attracting students who prioritise quality, inclusivity, and sustainability in their living arrangements. This promotional aspect can be a significant differentiator in the student housing market, showcasing the provider's commitment to excellence and student well-being.



4.3 Specific recommendations to protect students

Protecting students in housing agreements is crucial to ensuring their safety, security, and overall well-being during their studies. To achieve this, *it is essential that housing contracts are written in clear, straightforward language that is easily understandable*, avoiding legal jargon and ambiguous terms. Contracts should explicitly state all terms and conditions, including rent amounts, payment schedules, included utilities, and any additional fees. Detailed rent and payment information should be provided, clearly outlining the rent amount, due dates, acceptable payment methods, and details about any deposits, such as security or damage deposits, specifying the conditions under which they will be returned. Avoiding hidden fees by listing all potential additional costs upfront is also necessary.

Maintenance and repair responsibilities must be clearly specified for both the landlord and the tenant. This includes stating who is responsible for minor repairs and who will handle major repairs, along with procedures for reporting and addressing maintenance issues to ensure timely resolution. *Safety and security measures should be detailed in the accommodation contract*, including locks on doors and windows, smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, and 24-hour security services or surveillance. Students should be informed about emergency procedures and contact numbers for immediate assistance.

Non-discrimination clauses are essential to protect students from any form of discrimination based on race, gender, nationality, religion, disability, or other protected characteristics. The process for reporting and addressing discrimination complaints should be clearly outlined. Additionally, the contract should specify any accessibility features of the accommodation, such as wheelchair accessibility and adapted facilities, and provide details on how students can request reasonable accommodations if needed.

Privacy and respect for personal space must be addressed by outlining the landlord's obligations to respect the tenant's privacy. This includes conditions under which the landlord may enter the premises, such as for repairs or inspections and the required notice period for such entries. Ensuring that students have the right to quiet enjoyment of their living space is crucial.

Establishing comprehensive feedback mechanisms is also beneficial for allowing students to provide feedback on their housing experience. This could include regular surveys, suggestion boxes, or dedicated contact points for lodging complaints or suggestions, with a guarantee that feedback will be taken seriously and addressed promptly. Transparent termination policies should be clearly stated, outlining the conditions under which either party can terminate the contract, including notice periods, acceptable reasons for early termination, and any associated fees. Guidelines for the process of vacating the property, including the return of deposits and any final inspections, should also be provided.

Informing students of their legal rights and the resources available to them in case of disputes is essential. This may include local tenant unions, legal aid organisations, or university support services, with contact information and a brief description of how these resources can assist students. Regular inspections and maintenance checks should be scheduled to ensure the property remains in good condition, with students informed in advance about these inspections and provided with a clear schedule. These checks should be used to proactively address any potential issues before they become serious problems.

SECTION 5

Guidelines for Mobile
Students

Embarking on an international study journey is an exciting and transformative experience, but finding the right accommodation can often be one of the most challenging aspects. As a mobile student navigating the diverse and sometimes unfamiliar housing markets across Europe, having a clear understanding of your options is essential.

This section is designed to guide you through the various types of housing available, helping you make informed decisions that will enhance your study abroad experience. From university-provided dormitories to private rentals and specialised student housing, you'll find valuable insights on what each option offers, how to use the HOME Quality Labels to secure high-standard accommodations and practical tips for finding and settling into your new home abroad.

Whether you're looking for a long-term place to live or a short-term stay, these guidelines will equip you with the knowledge and tools needed to ensure a smooth and successful housing search.



5.1 Understanding the type of European housing offers

Navigating the diverse landscape of housing options in Europe can be complex for mobile students. This section aims to provide a **comprehensive overview of the various accommodation types available**, providing in an accessible manner relevant information on the types of European housing offers to allow informed decisions and contribute to facilitating the finding of the appropriate accommodation during students' studies abroad.

University-provided housing

One of the most convenient and reliable options for students is university-provided housing. These accommodations typically include **dormitories and on-campus apartments**. Living in university housing offers several advantages like the proximity to the campus allowing students to be close to classes, libraries, and other campus facilities to save time and make students' daily routine more manageable.

University housing often fosters a strong sense of community, making it easier to meet new friends and get involved in campus life. This contributes to one of the challenges of international mobility being local integration which is relevant in its impact on the overall mobility experience, impact, and performance of studies (*See, for instance, ESN Surveys*). Many universities also offer additional support services, such as resident advisors, maintenance, and security, ensuring a safe and comfortable living environment.

Private rentals

Another housing offer category providing more independence to students is private rental. Renting an apartment, a shared house, or a room from a private landlord might be the right choice. **Private rentals offer a wide range of options in terms of size, location, and amenities**. Regardless of the students' preferences, private rentals allow them to find something that suits their needs and budget.

Living in a private rental can also immerse students more deeply in the local culture and community, providing a richer and more authentic experience. Private rentals may also require students to manage more aspects of their living situation, such as utilities, maintenance, and communication with the landlord.

Specialised student housing providers

Specialised student housing providers focus exclusively on creating environments that cater to the needs of students. Even if private landlords can also decide to focus solely on students, accommodations by specialised housing providers - normally companies - often come with particular differences.

Excluding housing offers by specialised housing providers which are similar to those offered by landlords, a number of specialised student housing facilities can provide specific amenities like study rooms, social areas, fitness centres, and organised events, all designed to enhance your academic and social life.

These specialised accommodations may often include safety features such as secure entry systems, CCTV, and on-site management. Payment plans can also be specifically adapted for students even though these specialised offers including the amenities and services mentioned above may come at higher price compared to simpler accommodations provided by both housing providers and landlords.

Short-term accommodation

For students planning shorter stays, such as an Erasmus+ short-term mobility, a normal mobility semester, or a summer program, short-term accommodation options might be the best fit. These can include hostels acting as a temporary option while students search for more permanent housing.

Often offering a more home-like atmosphere, guesthouses can provide a comfortable and welcoming environment for short stays while specialised websites providing accommodations may offer short-term rental options that can provide more privacy and amenities compared to hostels and guesthouses.

5.2 How can students use the HOME Quality Labels in practice

Securing the right accommodation abroad is a critical aspect of a student's experience, and the HOME Quality Labels play a pivotal role in ensuring that students find housing that is safe, comfortable, and meets high standards. Understanding and utilising these labels can significantly enhance the housing search process. Videos explaining each HOME Quality Label can be found in the Quality Labels section of the thehomeproject.eu website.

Understanding the Quality Labels

The HOME Quality Labels are designed to address various essential aspects of student accommodation, each focusing on specific features to meet diverse student needs. For instance, the **International Friendliness label** ensures that accommodations are well-equipped to support international students, offering reliable Wi-Fi, comfortable study environments, short-term contracts, and English-speaking staff and documents. Similarly, the **Room Quality label** guarantees that accommodations provide well-furnished, comfortable living spaces with essential items like bed linen, pillows, and ample storage.

Safety is a top concern for many students, and the **Supersecure label** identifies accommodations with superior security features such as locks on doors, 24-hour concierge services, or video surveillance. For students seeking a more comfortable living experience, the **Premium Accommodation label** highlights options with exclusive features like sports facilities, pools, game rooms, and cleaning services.

Students who are looking for amenities allowing them to qualitatively cook will benefit from the **Well-equipped Kitchen label**, which identifies accommodations with excellent kitchen facilities, including a stove, oven, and additional appliances like a microwave or dishwasher. Similarly, the **Well-equipped Laundry label** ensures that the accommodation has proper laundry facilities, including a washing machine and additional conveniences like an iron, ironing board, or dryer. Lastly, the **Wheelchair Accessible label** signifies that accommodations are fully accessible for wheelchair users, ensuring that all facilities and amenities are designed for easy access.

Applying the Labels in the housing search

When searching for housing, students can utilise the HOME Quality Labels to identify accommodations that meet their specific needs. This process begins by determining which quality labels are most important. For instance, if safety is a priority, accommodations with the *Supersecure label* should be a focus. If accessibility is crucial, the *Wheelchair Accessible label* will be key.

Students can use the HOME solution currently integrated into the Erasmus+ App that lists accommodations with HOME Quality Labels, such as the HOME platform and the Erasmus+ App. The HOME solution gathers offers that have to declare whether they respect the Quality Labels and which ones. Verifying the presence of these labels involves checking the presence of the label/s in the HOME solution. The offers showcased in the HOME solution might still offer some of the amenities even if they do not reach the higher standard required to have a quality label so it will be up to the student to use the labels to see which offer fits their needs.

Communication with landlords or housing providers is also essential. Students should not hesitate to ask detailed questions about the specific features associated with the quality labels even outside the scope of the HOME solution platform. For instance, during a visit to an accommodation inquiring about the security measures in place or the available kitchen appliances can provide additional reassurance and students can use the HOME labels to inquire about specific aspects of their potential housing..

Reading reviews and testimonials from other students who have stayed in the accommodation can also offer valuable insights into whether the property lives up to its quality labels.

Ensuring compliance

Even with quality labels, it is important to ensure that the accommodations meet expectations. Visiting the accommodation in person, if possible, allows for a first-hand inspection of the property to confirm it meets the quality standards. Requesting detailed documentation of the accommodation's features and comparing this with the criteria for the relevant quality labels can also be beneficial. Nonetheless, for mobile students, visiting the accommodation might not be feasible and this is why the higher quality criteria of the labels aim at minimising the need for visits.

Maintaining open communication with the landlord or housing provider is crucial. Clarification on any unclear points and understanding all terms and conditions before committing to a lease helps in ensuring the accommodation meets the required standards.

Benefits of using Quality Labels

Utilising HOME Quality Labels in the housing search process offers several benefits. Knowing that an accommodation meets specific quality standards provides tranquillity to students, especially when navigating a new country and culture. Quality labels offer a straightforward way to assess the suitability of different housing options, aiding in informed decision-making. Moreover, staying in accommodation that meets high standards of comfort, safety, and inclusivity significantly enhances the overall study abroad experience.

While students do not need to understand the ins and outs of the technical Digital Data Standard of the Quality Labels, the “front-end” aspect of the labels and their immediate elements already provide a helpful guide to students which - along with communication materials provided in the homeproject.eu platform in the form of videos - gives a clear idea of what each label is about and what students can expect from housing offers with the labels.

5.3 Housing glossary

Understanding the terminology used in student housing is crucial for navigating the rental market effectively. This glossary provides clear and accessible definitions of common terms and concepts related to student accommodation, helping students make informed decisions.

1. Accommodation types

- **Dormitory:** A shared living facility, usually on or near campus, where students live in shared rooms with communal bathrooms and common areas.
- **Apartment:** A self-contained housing unit that typically includes a bedroom, living area, kitchen, and bathroom.
- **Studio:** A small, self-contained living space that combines the bedroom, living area, and kitchen into a single room, with a separate bathroom.
- **Shared house:** A rental property where multiple students live together, sharing common spaces such as the kitchen, living room, and bathroom.
- **Hostel:** A budget-friendly accommodation option that often features dormitory-style rooms with shared facilities, suitable for short-term stays.
- **Guesthouse:** A privately owned residence offering accommodation, often with a more personal and home-like atmosphere, usually suitable for short-term stays.

2. Contract terms

- **Lease:** A legally binding agreement between a landlord and tenant that outlines the terms and conditions of the rental arrangement, including the duration, rent amount, and responsibilities of both parties.
- **Security deposit:** A sum of money paid by the tenant to the landlord at the start of the lease, held as security against potential damage to the property or unpaid rent. It is typically refundable at the end of the lease, provided there are no damages or outstanding payments.
- **Utilities:** Services such as electricity, water, gas, and internet that are necessary for the operation of the accommodation. These may be included in the rent or paid separately by the tenant.
- **Maintenance:** The upkeep and repair of the property. The lease should specify who is responsible for maintenance tasks, such as fixing appliances or addressing structural issues.

3. Amenities and features

- **Wi-Fi:** Wireless internet access is provided within the accommodation. Essential for most students for academic and personal use.
- **Furnished:** Accommodation that comes with essential furniture such as a bed, desk, chair, and storage. It may also include appliances like a refrigerator and microwave.
- **En-suite:** A bedroom that includes a private bathroom. This term is often used in dormitories and shared houses.
- **Shared facilities:** Common areas and amenities that are used by all tenants, such as kitchens, bathrooms, laundry rooms, and living areas.
- **On-site laundry:** Laundry facilities provided within the accommodation building, including washing machines and dryers.
- **Security features:** Measures taken to ensure the safety of tenants, such as locks on doors, security cameras, and 24-hour concierge services.

4. Accessibility

- **Wheelchair accessible:** Accommodation that is designed or adapted to be accessible for wheelchair users, including features like ramps, wide doorways, and accessible bathrooms.
- **Universal design:** A design approach that makes buildings and environments accessible to all people, regardless of age, disability, or other factors.

5. Financial terms

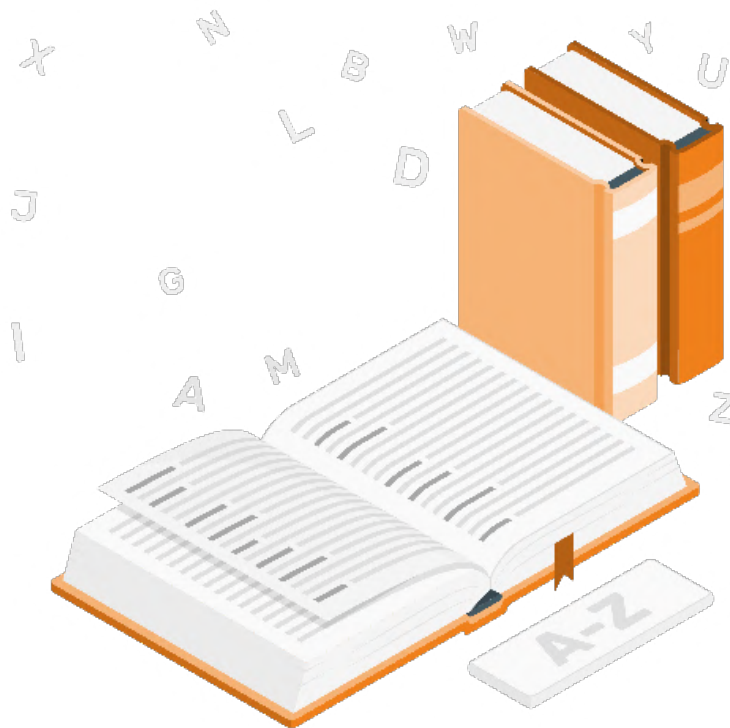
- **Rent:** The amount of money paid regularly by the tenant to the landlord for the use of the accommodation. Rent is usually paid monthly.
- **Deposit:** Another term for the security deposit. It is held as a safeguard against damage or unpaid rent.
- **Utilities included:** Indicates that the cost of utilities is included in the rent, meaning tenants do not need to pay separately for these services.
- **Bills included:** Similar to utilities included, this term indicates that the rent covers all bills, including utilities, internet, and sometimes additional services like cleaning.

6. Legal and rights

- **Tenancy agreement:** Another term for the lease, detailing the terms and conditions of the rental arrangement.
- **Notice period:** The amount of time a tenant or landlord must give before ending the tenancy. This period should be specified in the lease agreement.
- **Non-discrimination clause:** A provision in the lease that prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, nationality, religion, disability, or other protected characteristics.

7. Living arrangements

- **Single occupancy:** An arrangement where one tenant occupies a room or apartment.
- **Double occupancy:** An arrangement where two tenants share a room or apartment.
- **Flatmate/Housemate:** A person who shares a flat or house with others, sharing common areas but having their own bedroom.
- **Subletting:** When a tenant rents out their accommodation, or part of it, to another person. This usually requires the landlord's permission.



5.4 Tips for finding an accommodation abroad

As discussed until now, it is evident that securing the right accommodation abroad is crucial for ensuring a successful and enjoyable study experience. The following tips that we present in this guidebook are categorised into coherent groups in a checklist-like format to help students navigate this process effectively and have at their fingertips key tips with actionable items to make the search for an accommodation abroad easy.

Early preparation tips

Start early

Begin your housing search as soon as you receive your acceptance letter. Popular accommodations tend to fill up quickly, especially at the start of the academic year. Also, contact your university's housing office early on to inquire about available options and ensure you don't miss out on desirable accommodations.

Set a budget

Determine a realistic budget for your accommodation, considering rent, utilities, transportation, and food. Be mindful of additional expenses such as security deposits and insurance and make sure to account for these in your budget.

Prepare necessary documents

Gather all necessary documents for the rental application, such as identification, proof of enrollment, and financial statements. Some landlords may require a guarantor, especially for international students so ensure you have a reliable guarantor if needed.

Tips for research and using resources

Research neighbourhoods

Investigate different neighbourhoods around your university. Consider factors such as safety, proximity to campus, public transportation, and local amenities like grocery stores and healthcare facilities. You should also use online maps and even local forums to get a sense of the area's atmosphere and community.

Utilise university resources

Take advantage of your university's resources, including housing services and student associations. They often have listings of recommended accommodations and can provide valuable advice. Do not forget to attend housing fairs and informational sessions offered by the university.

Use trusted online platforms

Use reputable online platforms and websites dedicated to student housing. Look for platforms that provide verified listings and reviews from other students and avoid websites that seem unreliable or ask for large sums of money upfront without proper verification.

Verification and tips for visits

Read reviews and seek recommendations

Read reviews and testimonials from other students who have lived in the accommodation. These can provide insights into the living conditions and any potential issues. Moreover, ask for recommendations from fellow students, university staff, or friends who have studied abroad.

Consider temporary accommodation

If you are unable to secure long-term accommodation before arrival, consider booking temporary housing such as a hostel or guesthouse. This gives you time to search for permanent housing while being in the country. Many universities also offer temporary housing options for newly arrived students.

Visit if possible

If feasible, visit potential accommodations in person before making a decision. This allows you to inspect the property and meet the landlord or housing provider. If visiting is not possible, request a virtual tour or detailed photographs of the property.

Tips on lease and legal considerations

Verify terms and conditions

Carefully read the lease agreement and verify all terms and conditions. Ensure you understand the rental period, payment terms, and any additional fees. Confirm what is included in the rent, such as utilities and internet, to avoid unexpected costs.

Check safety and security

Ensure that the accommodation has adequate safety features such as locks on doors and windows, smoke detectors, and emergency exits. Research the safety of the neighbourhood, and check for features like street lighting and proximity to public transportation.

Seek legal advice if needed

If you have any doubts or concerns about the lease agreement or the rental process, seek legal advice. Many universities offer free or low-cost legal services for students.

Organisational tips and arrival planning

Stay organised

Keep a record of all correspondence with potential landlords or housing providers, including emails and written agreements. Create a checklist of what you need in your accommodation and use it to compare different options.

Plan for arrival

Make arrangements for your arrival, such as transportation from the airport to your accommodation. Ensure you have access to essential services like banking, mobile phone services, and healthcare in your new location.

ANNEX

Annex A: Break-out fact sheets on inclusion and housing contractual aspects

A.1. Fact sheet on inclusion

Inclusion in student housing: a pathway to a better experience for all

When we think about student housing, it's not just about finding a place to sleep or study. It's about creating a home away from home where every student, regardless of their background or abilities, feels welcome, safe, and supported. This is where the concept of inclusion in housing comes into play, making sure that all students have the opportunity to thrive in their new environments. Let's break down the key components of what makes housing inclusive and how it benefits everyone involved.

Affordability: more than just a price tag

Affordability is about more than just the rent; it's about transparency and fairness. Imagine moving to a new city and being able to easily compare the costs of different housing options, knowing exactly what you're paying for. This transparency ensures that all students, no matter their financial situation, can find a place that suits their budget without hidden surprises. When housing is affordable, it removes financial stress, allowing students to focus on what really matters—their studies and personal growth.

Non-discrimination: a safe space for all

Every student deserves to feel safe and respected in their living environment. By embedding explicit non-discrimination policies in rental contracts, we ensure that no one faces bias or unfair treatment based on who they are. This not only creates a more supportive atmosphere but also boosts academic performance. When students aren't worried about facing discrimination, they can concentrate better on their studies and participate fully in campus life.

Universal accessible design: opening doors for everyone

Inclusion means making sure that housing is accessible to everyone, including students with disabilities. Universal design standards ensure that buildings are not just compliant with the bare minimum, but genuinely welcoming to all. This includes everything from wheelchair ramps to wider doorways and accessible bathrooms. By planning for future enhancements, we also make sure that housing evolves to meet the needs of even more students over time. This kind of inclusivity doesn't just benefit those with disabilities—it enriches the entire community by fostering diversity and understanding.

Community engagement: building a supportive network

Housing isn't just about the physical space; it's also about the people who live there. Promoting community engagement through activities and policies helps students build relationships, share experiences, and support one another. This sense of belonging is especially important for students who are far from home, as it helps them feel connected and supported in their new environment. When students feel part of a community, their overall well-being improves, making their academic and personal experiences more fulfilling.

Cultural sensitivity: embracing diversity

We live in a global society, and our housing should reflect that. Cultural sensitivity in student housing means acknowledging and respecting the diverse backgrounds of all students. It's about creating a living environment where everyone's traditions, beliefs, and practices are understood and respected. This not only makes students feel more comfortable but also enriches the entire community by exposing everyone to different perspectives and ways of life.

Legal and ethical compliance: upholding standards

Finally, inclusion in housing is about doing what's right, both legally and ethically. By complying with anti-discrimination laws and upholding high ethical standards, housing providers ensure that they are providing a safe, fair, and welcoming environment for all students. This commitment to inclusion reflects a broader dedication to equality and justice, which is essential for creating a positive living and learning environment.

Criterion	Description	Benefit	Explanation
<i>Affordability</i>	Ensures transparent pricing with clear cost breakdowns and comparisons to average city prices.	<i>Enhanced Student Experience</i>	Creates a welcoming and supportive environment for all students, contributing to their overall well-being.
<i>Non-Discrimination</i>	Includes explicit non-discrimination policies in rental contracts and implements feedback mechanisms.	<i>Improved Academic Performance</i>	Reduces stress and distractions, allowing students to focus on their studies and succeed academically.
<i>Universal Accessible Design</i>	Meets standards for common disabilities with plans for future enhancements for broader accessibility.	<i>Greater Diversity and Integration</i>	Fosters a diverse community where students from various backgrounds can interact and learn from each other.
<i>Community Engagement</i>	Promotes activities and policies that foster social inclusion and community building among students.	<i>Legal and Ethical Compliance</i>	Ensures compliance with anti-discrimination laws and upholds ethical standards in student housing.
<i>Cultural Sensitivity</i>	Supports and respects diverse cultural backgrounds and practices within the student housing environment.		

A.2. Fact sheet on sustainability

Sustainability in student housing: living green and saving green

In today's world, sustainability isn't just a buzzword - it's a way of life that impacts our planet, our communities, and even our wallets. When it comes to student housing, embracing sustainable practices means creating living spaces that are not only eco-friendly but also cost-effective and healthy for everyone. Let's dive into the key elements of sustainability in housing and explore how they benefit students and the environment alike.

Energy efficiency: powering your home, not draining your wallet

Imagine living in a place where your energy use is optimised, and your bills are kept low without sacrificing comfort. That's the power of energy efficiency. By using energy-efficient appliances, adhering to green building standards, and even tapping into renewable energy sources, sustainable housing ensures that every watt of electricity is used wisely. This doesn't just mean lower utility bills for students; it also means a smaller carbon footprint. So, when you flip on a light switch or heat your room, you're doing it in a way that's kinder to the planet—and your budget.

Waste management: turning trash into treasure

We all know how much waste can pile up, especially in a busy student life. But what if we could turn that trash into something valuable? Effective waste management in sustainable housing does just that. Through recycling programs, composting, and proper disposal of hazardous materials, sustainable housing reduces the amount of waste that ends up in landfills. This not only minimises the environmental impact but also fosters a culture of responsibility and mindfulness among students. Every time you recycle a bottle or compost your food scraps, you're contributing to a cleaner, greener world.

Water conservation: every drop counts

Water is a precious resource, and sustainable housing treats it as such. By installing water-saving fixtures and systems, these homes ensure that every drop is used efficiently. This means lower water bills for students and a significant contribution to conserving one of our most vital natural resources. Whether it's a low-flow showerhead or a faucet with a water filter, these small changes make a big difference in reducing water consumption. And as you save on your bills, you're also helping to preserve the environment for future generations.

Eco-friendly materials: a healthier place to call home

The materials that make up your living space matter more than you might think. Sustainable housing uses eco-friendly, non-toxic materials that are better for both the planet and the people living there. This includes everything from the paint on the walls to the furniture in your room. By choosing sustainable materials, these homes create a healthier living environment, free from harmful chemicals that can affect your well-being. It's not just about being green—it's about ensuring that your home is a safe and comfortable place to live, study, and thrive.

Criterion	Description	Benefit	Explanation
<i>Energy Efficiency</i>	Use of energy-efficient appliances and systems, adherence to green building standards, and implementation of renewable energy sources.	<i>Reduced Utility Costs</i>	Lower energy consumption leads to reduced utility bills for tenants and contributes to environmental conservation.
<i>Waste management</i>	Effective waste reduction and recycling programs, including composting and proper disposal of hazardous materials.	<i>Environmental Impact</i>	Reduces the amount of waste sent to landfills, promotes recycling, and minimises the environmental footprint of the housing.
<i>Water conservation</i>	Installation of water-saving fixtures and systems to reduce water consumption.	<i>Lower Water Bills</i>	Decreases water usage, leading to lower water bills for tenants and supports the conservation of water resources.
<i>Eco-Friendly Materials</i>	Use of sustainable, non-toxic building materials and furnishings.	<i>Healthier Living Environment</i>	Provides a healthier living space by reducing exposure to harmful chemicals and promoting sustainability.

A.3. Fact sheet on housing contractual aspects for different student populations

Navigating housing contracts: tailoring to every student's needs

When it comes to securing a place to live during your studies, understanding the ins and outs of your housing contract is crucial. But it's not a one-size-fits-all situation—different students have different needs, whether they're part of the general population, international students, or students with disabilities. This guide breaks down key aspects of housing contracts to show how they can be tailored to support everyone, ensuring that each student can find a home that suits their unique situation.

Rent payment: flexibility matters

For most students, paying rent is a straightforward process, usually done monthly or quarterly. But for international students, paying rent might involve dealing with foreign banks, currency exchanges, or different payment systems. To make this easier, flexible payment schedules that accommodate these challenges are crucial. Meanwhile, students with disabilities might have additional financial considerations, so their payment plans might include adjustments to support any disability-related needs. The goal is to make sure that no matter where you're from or what your needs are, paying rent is stress-free and straightforward.

Security deposit: making it manageable

When you move into a new place, a security deposit is often required—usually one to two months' rent. For international students, providing a deposit can be tricky, especially without a local guarantor. That's why it's important to offer options that make this easier, like accepting international guarantors. For students with disabilities, ensuring that deposits are reasonable and accessible is key, so they're not burdened with extra financial stress. Ultimately, the security deposit should protect both the tenant and the landlord, while being fair and manageable for everyone involved.

Lease termination: handling the unexpected

Life is unpredictable, and sometimes you might need to end your lease earlier than planned. For the general student population, this usually involves standard notice periods and conditions. However, international students might face unique challenges, like visa issues, that require more flexible termination policies. Similarly, students with disabilities might need to terminate a lease due to health or accessibility reasons. Contracts must reflect these possibilities, offering clear and fair options for early termination to accommodate these unforeseen circumstances.

Maintenance and repairs: keeping your home in shape

Maintenance and repairs are a part of life in any rental property. For most students, this involves following standard procedures for reporting and addressing issues. But for international students, language barriers can make this process more difficult, so contracts should include language support to ensure they can easily report problems. Students with disabilities might require priority handling of repairs or modifications to meet their accessibility needs. By making sure these processes are clear and supportive, all students can feel confident that their living space will be safe and well-maintained.

Privacy and respect: your space, your rules

Everyone deserves to feel safe and respected in their home. For the general population, privacy policies typically cover notice for entry and other basic protections. However for international students, cultural differences might affect expectations of privacy, so contracts should be sensitive to these differences. For students with disabilities, privacy and respect take on additional importance, particularly if they require personal assistance or specific accommodations. Ensuring strict adherence to privacy rules helps create a living environment where all students feel comfortable and secure.

Non-discrimination policies: fair treatment for all

Non-discrimination is a fundamental right for all students, and housing contracts should reflect this by including clauses that protect against discrimination based on race, gender, nationality, and other factors. For international students, these policies emphasise inclusivity and support for diverse cultural backgrounds, ensuring they feel welcome in their new environment. For students with disabilities, contracts should include specific clauses that protect against discrimination related to their disability, ensuring they are treated with the same respect and fairness as everyone else.

Accessibility provisions: opening doors for everyone

Accessibility is key to ensuring that students with disabilities can live comfortably and independently. While basic accessibility features might be available for the general population, international students need clear information about accessible facilities and how to request any necessary accommodations. For students with disabilities, housing contracts should include detailed provisions for accessible design and facilities, with straightforward instructions on how to request further accommodations if needed. This ensures that all students, regardless of their physical abilities, can find a place that feels like home.

Aspect	General population	International students	Students with disabilities
<i>Rent payment</i>	Monthly or quarterly payment options.	Flexible payment schedules to accommodate international banking constraints.	Same as the general population, with potential adjustments for disability-related financial needs.
<i>Security deposit</i>	Typically one to two months' rent.	Options for international guarantors to simplify the process.	Same as the general population, ensuring deposits are reasonable and accessible.
<i>Lease termination</i>	Standard notice periods and conditions for termination.	Consideration for visa issues and flexibility for early termination.	Early termination clauses for accessibility or health-related issues.
<i>Maintenance and repairs</i>	Standard procedures for reporting and addressing issues.	Language support for reporting maintenance issues.	Priority handling of accessibility-related repairs and modifications.
<i>Privacy and respect</i>	Standard privacy policies, including notice for entry.	Enhanced privacy considerations for international students who may have different cultural expectations.	Strict adherence to privacy and respect for personal space, with additional considerations for disability-related needs.
<i>Non-discrimination policies</i>	Clauses ensuring non-discrimination based on race, gender, nationality, etc.	Emphasis on inclusivity and support for diverse cultural backgrounds.	Specific clauses to protect against discrimination based on disability, ensuring equal treatment.
<i>Accessibility provisions</i>	Basic accessibility features, if available.	Information on accessible facilities and how to request accommodations.	Detailed provisions for accessible design and facilities, with clear instructions for requesting further accommodations.

Annex B: Students survey results

Coming soon on thehomeproject.eu

Annex C: Shortened and more accessible version of the Guidelines for external usage

References

- Dias, R., Buseyne, S., Haadad, Y., Topi, K., Dear, C., Mistretta, L., Rayón Gonzalez, J., & Gabriels, W. (2024). ESNsurvey - 15th edition: Making quality mobility a reality for all. Erasmus Student Network AISBL

