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Introduction HOME for higher education institutions

Accommodation is one of the first concerns of students when they start planning their mobility abroad. The HOME (Home of Mobile Europeans) project developed a student housing search tool, which will be integrated into the “go-to” app for international students - the Erasmus+ App. The project also developed a new digital housing data standard that aims at improving the quality of student accommodations in Europe and increasing the quality and transparency of offers while boosting the competitiveness of the offers themselves.

The HOME project did careful research work cooperating with all key stakeholders (HEIs, housing providers and market intermediaries, student organisations, students) to gather the most relevant features when it comes to student accommodations specifically to create a common European standard. This is the HOME’s innovative digital housing data standard (DDS in short).

This DDS is the stepping stone for the quality labels. In fact, the DDS is quite technical in nature and not appropriate to use to immediately and easily highlight what an accommodation has to offer. This is why the second important output of HOME has been to create a set of quality labels. These labels are like medals that are assigned to housing offers and these are obtained if the accommodation fulfils certain criteria which - you guessed - are the criteria deriving from the DDS. So, if a student housing offer has internet, furniture, an English contract, concierge service and more, the accommodation would be eligible to receive a quality label that would gather those features.

The scope of the project also included the development of a Competence Center where HOME’s main stakeholders can access learning resources tailored to their specific needs and circumstances so they can take the most advantage and replicate the project’s innovative results.



The following document is created specifically for higher education institutions (HEIs) around Europe and will help them understand the benefits of the HOME solutions for their students and for their support to this challenging task such as helping them find a quality accommodation.

The role of the HEIs in the context of the HOME is threefold:

- To support their international exchange students and trainees under the Erasmus+ programme by offering them quality accommodation;
- To act as HOME ambassadors, engaging with a local strategy to inform about and connect with all student housing providers in the region that are not registered at HOME;
- To join the HOME solution as a housing provider.

Therefore, this document will help them understand how the HOME system works and will prepare them to explain to students how to use it for their particular housing needs.

Benefits of the HOME solution for HEIs

Supporting students, both outgoing and incoming, in finding a suitable accommodation can be very challenging. Having quality and verified listings in one place, is the main advantage of HOME, which HEIs can benefit from. By promoting the HOME solution on the Erasmus+ App, HEIs generally increase the offering of reliable accommodation services for mobile students and this helps them increase their students' satisfaction.

Another advantage for HEIs is that HOME would help initiate a better connection between local housing providers and HEIs, and thus encourage the latter to contribute to increasing the number of listings on the platform, offered to students from private housing providers.

Finally, the HOME solution connects European HEIs and increases the cooperation between them, thanks to a standardised offer of accommodation.



Digital Data Standard and Accommodation Quality Labels

This section aims to explain the digital data standard and accommodation quality labels developed in the framework of HOME.

The **Digital Data Standard (DDS)**, as the name says, is a univocal way to collect and structure data about student accommodation from all the different European-wide student housing providers.

It has been created by mapping all the student housing data of sixteen large student housing providers and intermediaries across Europe. This allowed the consortium to identify the most important and wide-spread data used within the student housing sector in Europe.

By making housing providers and intermediaries adhere to the created data standard, the HOME application can ensure the correct entitlement of the **Student Quality Labels** to the accommodations and a smooth integration to the HOME application. Moreover, the validation of the DDS ensured the transparency and diversity of the HOME solution.

The latest version of the Digital Data Standard can be found here: <https://housinganywhere.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/Mitra/blog/2021/12/16/2410086409/HOME+-+Digital+Data+Standard+Revision> (to be changed to an HTML within the EUF environment)

The **Student Accommodation Quality Labels** of the HOME solution aim to increase the quality and transparency of information about student accommodation. They have been set up after intensive research towards the national standards, practices and legal frameworks in different EU countries, combined with research on accommodation indicators, typology of student accommodations, living labels, and standard-related search terms and focus groups with students.




At this moment students are overloaded with a lot of different and mostly incomplete information on student housing information on a plethora of housing platforms. The Quality Labels provide students with a selected,



comprehensive, but not excessively detailed list of important student accommodation aspects.

During a roundtable with key stakeholders of the student accommodation sector it became clear that the focus ought to be placed mainly on the **importance of safe and sustainable housing**. These labels will be thus integrated into the Erasmus+ App via the **DDS** as described above and an API to allow students to know in detail what features relevant to them the house has to offer, to foster more transparency and information sharing between students and providers, and to allow providers to showcase their offer **with indicators that the students are interested in**.

The Quality Labels have been set-up after intensive research towards the national standards, practices and legal frameworks in different EU countries, combined with research on accommodation indicators, typology of student accommodations, living labels, and standard-related search terms and focus groups with students. Therefore, the most relevant quality aspects of the student accommodation became the HOME Quality Labels presented in the table below.

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>International friendliness:</p> <p>Accommodation adequate to the needs of international students. The criteria to receive this label include wi-fi, furniture, communication and contract in English, online booking available and more.</p> |
|  | <p>Room quality:</p> <p>Room provided with all necessary furniture. Accommodations with this labels are expected to have things like beds, pillows, bath towels, and bed line.</p> |
|  | <p>Super secure:</p> <p>Accommodation providing above average safety features, including against fire accidents. You can sleep peacefully with security measures like lock on room door, security (armoured) door, and building surveillance(video or concierge 24/7)</p> |



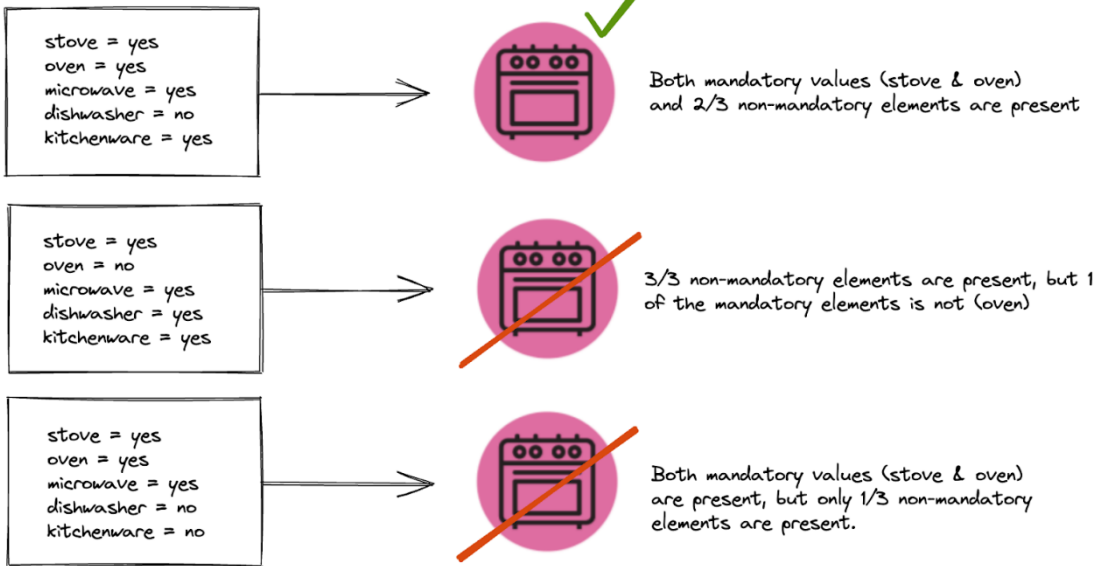
| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>Premium accommodation:</p> <p>Accommodation providing exclusive features. Here you can expect at least two of the following facilities or services: gym, pool, game room, 24/7 concierge, cleaning services.</p> |
|  | <p>Well-equipped kitchen:</p> <p>Well-equipped accommodation, displaying above average kitchen appliances like a dishwasher, oven, microwave, kitchenware and more.</p> |
|  | <p>Well-equipped laundry:</p> <p>Well-equipped accommodation, displaying above average laundry appliances including washing machine, iron and iron board, drying rack.</p> |

In the figure below is the example of the Quality Label: Well-equipped kitchen. Every Quality Label has an icon, criteria and a set of indicators. Every indicator has a corresponding data value that is present in the Digital Data Standard.

The logic for this label is that the accommodation should provide all the mandatory indicators and at least 2 out of 3 non-mandatory indicators. A couple of example scenarios for the Well-equipped kitchen Quality Label:

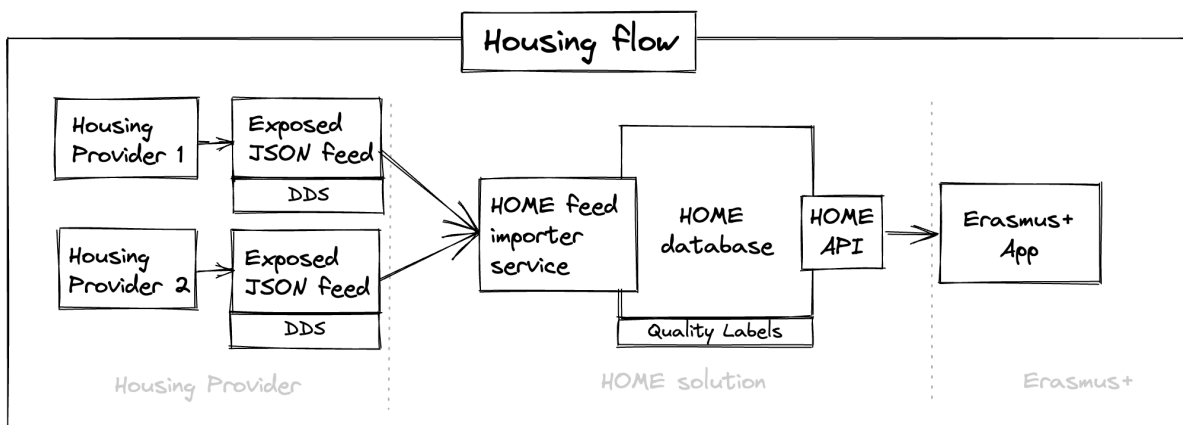


Data provided by the Housing Provider via JSON feed according to the Digital Data Standard



Technical architecture

In this section the technical architecture of the HOME solution is explained, to create a better understanding regarding the flow of housing information for HEIs that are willing to join as housing providers.



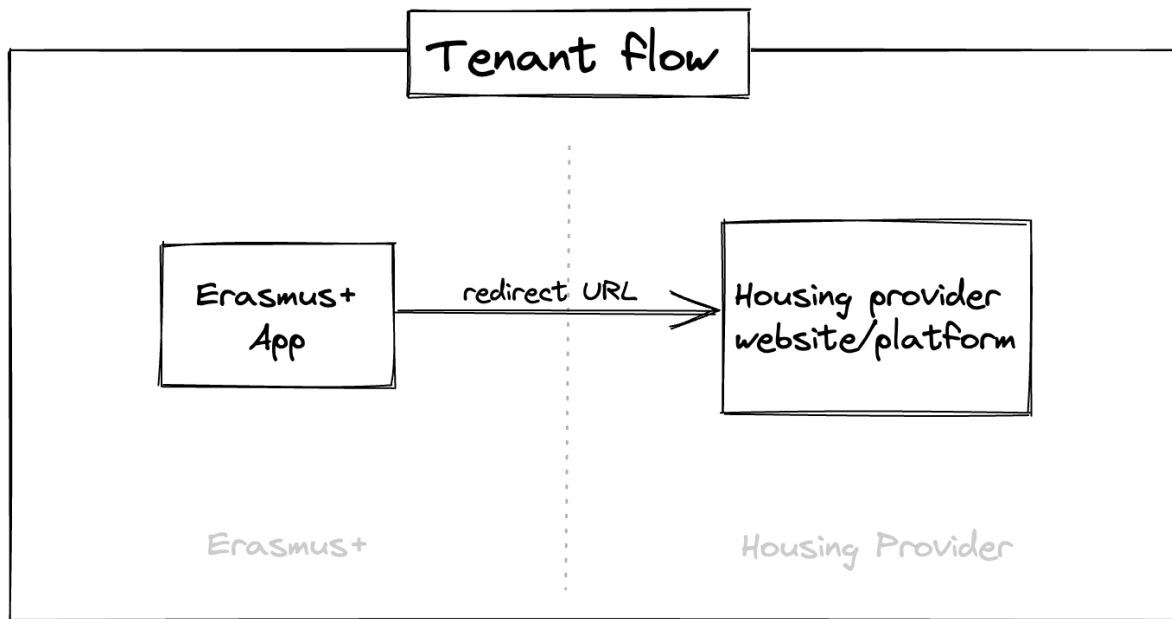
The following steps describe the housing flow, visually represented in the diagram above:

1. A student housing provider has several listings they want to publish on the Erasmus+ app.
2. They create a JSON feed according to the developed HOME Digital Data Standard (DDS) specified format with all the listings they want to publish on the Erasmus+ App. More on the Digital Data Standard (DDS) later in this article.
3. The URL of the created JSONfeed will be added to the HOME importer service. The importer service will add all the provided housing information to the HOME database.
4. Each feed will be read and updated once every day.
5. For each new unique listing added to the feed by the housing provider, a new listing will be added to the HOME database. If an existing listing is no longer found in the feed it will be removed from the HOME database.
6. If a known listing is found in the feed, the existing listing will be updated in the HOME database.
7. Based on the provided housing information, the developed HOME Quality Labels will be attributed to every housing offer. More on the HOME Quality Labels later in this article.
8. The Erasmus+ App will pull all the housing information from the HOME database via the HOME API and display all the housing offers in the housing section of the Erasmus+ App.

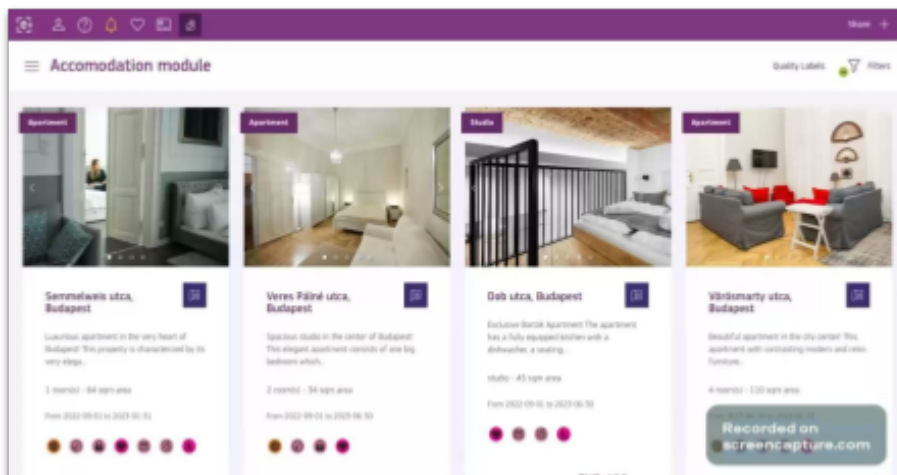
The displayed housing offer in the Erasmus+ App, can be viewed by all international students, and potential tenants, using the Erasmus+ App. If a student is interested in a specific housing offer and decides to move forward, the student will be redirected to the website, platform or booking flow from the housing provider that published the housing offer. The specific redirect URL for this offer is provided by the housing provider in the JSON feed. A visual representation of the tenant flow is in the diagram below.

All the technical elements within the HOME application are open-sourced, ensuring wide future dissemination within the Erasmus environment. In the scope of the project is the integration with the Erasmus+ App.





HOME User experience on the Erasmus+ App



HOME “Train the trainer” multiplier toolkit

The HOME consortium decided to create a multiplier toolkit drawing on the expertise of the HOME project partners to create an accessible and easy-to-use tool to support users in setting up multiplier events.

The content of the multiplier toolkit will be in the context of student accommodation and adaptable by users allowing them to easily engage with their beneficiaries and stakeholders with a ready-made impactful structure tested by the partners on the ground.

The toolkit provides step-by-step guidelines on how to bring together local actors of international student housing and will include multiplier session outlines for students NGOs, HEIs, and housing providers and there are templates to more easily implement the multiplier event.

The multiplier toolkit is available at the HOME website <https://www.thehomeproject.eu/>.

