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Introduction

The HOME (Home Of Mobile Europeans) project developed a number of student housing quality labels to support international students. These labels are part of a new digital housing data standard that aims at improving the quality of student accommodations in Europe and increase the quality and transparency of offers while boosting the competitiveness of the offers themselves.

The larger effort of the HOME project is to evolve student housing and help students on mobility programmes find accommodations by giving them accessible and streamlined tools.

The tips and tricks as well as the issues handling sections will benefit from the work and the research previous done within the HousErasmus+ EU project predecessor of HOME and which acted as one of the main driving forces leading to the current project. Let's dive in and take a look at these items to support you as a student looking for an accommodation. One more thing, the HOME project is developing a tool to showcase housing



offers in the Erasmus+ App so download the Erasmus+ App and spread the word about HOME with your fellow students and university!

The importance of the HOME accommodation quality labels for students

Let's start with the HOME quality labels. What is a quality label and why are the HOME labels so important for international students? Quality labels are assigned to offers to conform to certain standards that are of interest and benefit for students. If you think of your ideal student accommodation what comes to your mind? You might be thinking of affordability, room quality, accessibility and more. That is what the HOME quality labels are about but also much more.







Every student might have different preferences: some might want a cheaper accommodation with basic amenities, others might want a more expensive one with premium services. What the HOME project partners did was to research what these preferences are on a European scale and streamline them thanks to the experience of experts and the input of students to create quality labels that satisfy all users' needs. This is where it gets interesting.

Other housing sectors have common standards to which they adhere to guarantee a certain quality and transparency. With the HOME project, we have created a standard specifically for international students and student housing. This standard has a lot of technical background but in a nutshell all the data about a house (rooms quantity, internet, and many more) are filtered and channelled to then tick the box of one or more quality labels. When the quality label is assigned to a certain student housing you can then be more at ease about the trustworthiness of such a label.

This is a game-changer for the world of student housing because more than 300.000 international students each year will be able to find



accommodations that best suit their needs and preferences and that transparently show what a specific accommodation has to offer.

	<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>



	Well-equipped accommodation, displaying above average laundry appliances including washing machine, iron and iron board, drying rack.
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And now, the grand finale. The ambition of HOME is to make this the game-changer by integrating a housing search engine function directly into the Erasmus+ App. This means that you will be able to look and find accommodations directly from the Erasmus+ App and each offer will be assigned a quality label there. This will result in students being able to access more and more mobility-related services from the Erasmus+ App, all will be truly in one place. Moreover, housing providers and market intermediaries will be able to access a platform that will offer them a competitive edge in exchange of full transparency for their offer. The quality labels becoming part of a European digital housing data standard also means that a culture of better offers will be promoted with more and more providers investing efforts in ensuring eligibility for the HOME quality label. We're writing the future history of mobility today and we're very excited about what the future holds! In the meantime, you can watch and share the animated videos we created showcasing the HOME quality labels [here](#).

Some tips on securing an accommodation before your mobility

Finding an accommodation for students presents various obstacles. One of the main obstacles is to find accurate information about accommodations and this leads to students often going abroad without a permanent accommodation arranged. So what are some tips and tricks that students can do to help them secure an accommodation?

- Look for lists of landlords and housing providers. These lists are a very efficient way for finding accommodation and they are often provided by student organisations as well.



- Connect yourself with Higher Education Institutions like universities. Research shows that looking for information about accommodations via channels not connected to HEIs leads to a lower chance of finding accommodation. In particular, you should get in touch with the international officers of your host institution.
- Download and log into the Erasmus+ App. The Erasmus+ App is the official one-stop-shop to access Erasmus+ mobilities. More and more students are connecting to the App and the HOME project itself aims at allowing students to look for accommodation via the App itself. The Erasmus+ App also already presents key information that can facilitate the search for accommodation for example via community tips shared by other students and more.
- Get informed about the most important legal rights and obligations concerning landlord and tenant relations in your mobility destination country. Finding an accommodation is important but to secure one you need to be aware of your rights and duties.
- Get in touch with local student organisations that can help you with useful information about finding an accommodation. One example are Erasmus Student Network local sections and other similar student organisations that are there to help you.
- Ask other colleagues from your home institution who already went to a mobility about their experience in looking for an accommodation, the challenges they faced, and the lessons they learnt. This direct peer-to-peer approach is very useful to have first-hand and experience-based useful information.



Here are some ways to handle issues arising with the property, owners, and market intermediaries

There are a number of structural issues that arise when it comes to student housing and that international students often have to face. We will now take a look at them and offer actions that students can take to address these in an accessible bullet points format.

- **Mobile student accommodation issues are not tackled**

As a student, share your accommodation needs with student organisations to support the advocacy work toward Higher Education Institutions and policymakers.

- **Lack of support when facing an issue**

Reach out to student organisations working on housing issues and to your host institution's international office if you are facing an issue that you do not know how to solve when it comes to your accommodation as an international student. This will ultimately lead to more recognition of the issue and prepare the ground for more structured actions to solve it.

- **Discrimination and fraud**

When faced with a case of discrimination or fraud, you should contact the international relations office of your host institution. You should also contact student organisations to ask for support and follow-up with the options available to protect yourself.

- **Financial guarantee**

As part of the contractual conditions of a potential student accommodation you might often be asked to show some guarantee that you will be able to pay your rent. Landlords might ask for your parent's work contracts and salaries or your own, or they might ask for proof of you receiving a grant. Do keep this in mind when looking for an accommodation.



- **Language barrier and cultural differences**

Sometimes you might encounter a language or a cultural barrier when liaising with your landlord. Asking for advice to your hosting institution's international offices and to your local student organisations are two powerful tools at your disposal to best manage and surpass these barriers and interact with your landlord in the most positive and effective way.

- **Contractual breaches**

If the housing contract is breached by either of the two parties and negotiations might prove to be complicated do not hesitate to ask for advice to your international relations office or to student organisations. They might in turn put you in contact with experts that can help you sort your problem. Of course, prevention is always better than cure so make sure to review the housing contract multiple times before signing and do not hesitate to ask for help if you need clarity on something.

Conclusion

Different students have different needs when it comes to finding a good accommodation for their international mobility period. Despite these differences some basic needs are the same and they are the need for transparency and quality.

Transparency means that students should be able to know clearly what a potential accommodation has to offer while quality means that the offer can meet the student's need satisfactorily. HOME is working to achieve this thanks to its quality labels and the integration within the Erasmus+ App allowing students to find quality offers with ease.

But finding a good accommodation is not all. While being a tenant issues might arise and knowledge is the best tool to tackle issues arising with property, owners, and market intermediaries. The best strategy when it comes to this is to get in touch with student organisations who can give you advice, to get in touch with the international office of your host university, to get informed about the national law guiding tenant-owner rights and responsibilities, and to read carefully the contract and respect it.



For more serious or complicated issues it is best to get in touch with a legal expert.

With these tools and tips you're set to have a nice and peaceful experience when it comes to student accommodation to fully focus on your studies. We hope this guide will help you!

References

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