



# Policy Snapshot: *Community Land Trusts*

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## WHAT ARE COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS?

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are used in a growing but still geographically dispersed set of European countries, particularly in Belgium, the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands, with emerging initiatives in Ireland, Spain and Germany. Across Europe there are now over 500 CLTs, although around 300 represent active or developing projects, with the largest concentration in the United Kingdom. On continental Europe, activity is spread across a small number of cities rather than concentrated in one location. Brussels is the most established example, where the model has been supported by regional policy, public land and subsidy frameworks since 2012. However, CLT development remains uneven and limited in countries lacking comparable institutional and policy support

## WHY ARE THEY USED?

CLTs are used to remove land from speculation, preserve long-term affordability, and prevent displacement in high-pressure neighbourhoods. They recycle public subsidy, empower residents through shared governance, and ensure housing remains permanently accessible to lower-income households.

## HOW DO THEY WORK IN PRACTICE?

CLTs function by acquiring land, usually with public subsidies, and placing it in community ownership while issuing 99-year renewable ground leases to households. In Brussels, the CLTB develops housing with cooperative or mission-driven developers, applies resale formulas that retain about two-thirds of appreciation for the community, and embeds long-term affordability into lease conditions. Residents own their homes but not the land, ensuring price stability and preventing displacement. Governance involves residents, civil-society actors and public representatives, who collectively oversee stewardship, resale, and community assets.





## WHERE ARE THEY USED IN EUROPE?

The use of Community Land Trusts (CLTs) is now quite widespread across Europe. According to a 2020 survey, there are over 170 urban CLTs created or under creation in Europe. Countries with active CLTs include Belgium, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Germany, France, Ireland and the movement is expanding into more countries. The first CLT implemented on continental Europe was launched in Brussels in 2012.

## WHAT ARE THE RELATIVE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES?

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Permanently removes land from speculative markets.</li><li>• Ensures durable affordability via regulated resale formulas.</li><li>• Prevents displacement in gentrifying or pressured neighbourhoods.</li><li>• Builds community stewardship through shared governance structures.</li><li>• Retains public subsidy and equity gains for collective benefit.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scaling is limited by high land prices without public support.</li><li>• Requires strong technical, legal and stewardship capacity.</li><li>• Governance demands significant community participation and continuity.</li><li>• Legal frameworks vary, creating administrative complexity across regions.</li></ul>

### Where can I learn more?

- O'Brien, P., Earley, A., O'Hara, L. and Lawson, J. Land Policy Instruments for the Provision of Social and Affordable Housing  
[https://equalhouse.eu/media/Publications/Making\\_Housing\\_Affordable/EH%20Land%20Report\\_PD\\_F.pdf](https://equalhouse.eu/media/Publications/Making_Housing_Affordable/EH%20Land%20Report_PD_F.pdf)
- Lawson, J. M., & Anisimov, O. (2026). Making a difference: Land policies and housing in the field, Just Cities for Equal House  
[https://equalhouse.eu/media/Publications/Income\\_Wealth\\_and\\_Housing\\_Inequalities/Final%20Land%20Policy%20Field%20Work%20Report%20Equal%20House%20WP5.pdf](https://equalhouse.eu/media/Publications/Income_Wealth_and_Housing_Inequalities/Final%20Land%20Policy%20Field%20Work%20Report%20Equal%20House%20WP5.pdf)



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