

THE STRAW NEIGHBOURHOOD OF NIJMEGEN IN THE NETHERLANDS

In 2015 the biggest straw neighbourhood in the Netherlands was open in Nijmegen, in the Gelderland Province, becoming famous not only for the ecological choices construction but also for the participatory manner in which it was built.

With a global area of 2269 m², the [lewan building](#) consists of 24 houses, green spaces and public areas for work and social activities.

The *lewan* neighbourhood is an example of environmentally friendly way of building. The construction is made of straw bales, combined with wood and clay. Energy is produced with solar panels and the waste water and rainwater are purified to feed the plants of the building gardens.

The *lewan* neighbourhood is also an example of social housing. On 2013 the [Summer Foundation](#) designed the plan to build an ecological residential community, with social housing made of straw bales in the city of Nijmegen. The future inhabitants partnered in the *lewan* (Initiative group Ecological Living Nijmegen) and launched a campaign in order to find partners and to raise funds for the project. The group of future inhabitants partnered up with building corporation Talis, construction firm Vastbouw, the housing association Gelderland (WBVG) and ORIO architects. The project has also received support from the city of Nijmegen and the province of Gelderland.

The *lewan* project celebrated the official start on March 2014 and on May 2015 the straw neighbourhood was inaugurated with the participation of all the involved actors. In 2014 the *lewan* Corporation realized free workshops on building with straw, loam and timber in order to allow the inhabitants to be not only the commissioners of the neighbourhood, but also to help to build the houses. This innovative project of a new ecologic village also involved 200 volunteers.

The [lewan Facebook](#) presents a collection of photos documenting the construction process, published in this article.



Construction with straw is one of the best examples of green building. Straw, combined with wood and clay, is an extremely durable material to build with. Straw is a renewable and abundant resource that permits many architectural solutions, in both modern and rustic style.

Straw blocks are made by the waste remaining from harvest. Some of the most widely used grains are barley, wheat, rye and rice. The waste is compressed by a packing machine which produces the straw bales so well known to farmers. The construction technique consists in utilizing straw blocks as if they were bricks.

Using this super-insulating element, healthy and organic spaces can be obtained, very effective also in seismic zones. The walls are flexible and resist better than conventional fixed systems, such as concrete and are fire resistant. This kind of eco-construction is efficient and durable.

Straw was used in construction for thousands of years in combination with clay to keep out humidity. Today, due to the height environmental impact of the construction industry, this technique has the greatest potential, because of its competitiveness and environmental advantages.

The number of houses, buildings, schools and health centres built with Straw bales constantly increasing around the world and many institutions, companies, cooperatives and professional centres are being specialized in this convenient construction technique and in the related training activities.

To know more

[Iewan website](#)

[Iewan Facebook](#)

[Summer-Foundation website](#)

[Iewan in Youtube](#)

[Reseau Francais de la Construcción Paille](#)

[Esbq2015.eu](#)

[Casasdepaja.org](#)

[Lamaisonenpaille.com](#)

[Strawbale.com](#)

[Building your straw-bale home](#)

