



October 2017

- ◆◆◆ Welcome to Annika Wahlberg, new IUT-secretary general ◆◆◆
- IUT working group meets in Brussels ◆◆◆ new housing initiative report in the CoR
- ◆◆◆ Agreement to EU Pillar of Social Rights ◆◆◆ Statistics-the state of housing in the EU 2017

Annika Wahlberg, new IUT Secretary General

Annika Wahlberg joined the International Union of Tenants (IUT) in August as Secretary General. She is based in Stockholm, Sweden.

IUT now has 69 members in 45 different countries and Annika's first task was to receive the handover from Magnus Hammar, the previous Secretary General – 18 years of knowledge in two days.

Annika moved to England as a teenager where she initially studied law and statistics and subsequently worked in international capital markets, treasury and investor relations for some 20 years. Following the financial crisis she changed direction and worked for a number of membership organisations: the Royal Agricultural Society, the Swedish Chamber of Commerce, the International Capital Markets Association, UK Crowdfunding Association, and a brief stint in Alternative Finance at Cambridge University. This spring she decided it was time to move back to Sweden which she did a week before starting at IUT.



Annika Wahlberg

Annika is looking forward to working and, living in Sweden and making Stockholm her home again, whilst retaining the international connections. She has a lifelong interest in people, projects and properties/homes and the position at IUT therefore appears to be a perfect fit. Annika is looking forward to working with Barbara Steenbergen who heads IUT's EU representative office, the Board, IUT's members, and its large network across the world.

Welcome Annika!

Meeting of the IUT WG housing policy in Brussels

At the second meeting of the IUT general housing policy working at the IUT office in Brussels, group representatives from the tenant unions from Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Czech Republic and the Netherlands participated as well as IUT president **Sven Bergensträhle**, IUT secretary general **Annika Wahlberg**, and **Barbara Steenbergen**, head of IUT EU office.

The working group, which is chaired by **Anna Lönn Lundbäck**, regional manager of the SUT West-Sweden/Gothenburg, is preparing the IUT contribution to the EU-partnership for housing. In the meeting September 13/14 with the main topic “security of tenure” critical developments like the increasing limitation of rent contracts and the softening of the legal protection of tenants in connection with energetic renovation and transformation of buildings were discussed.



Anna Lönn Lundbäck

The working group will present political recommendations linked to legal solutions. They will feed into the affordable housing toolkit which will be presented by the EU housing partnership¹ at the end of 2018. **Barbara Steenbergen**, head of IUT Brussels office, will present first results at the

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/housing>

partnership meeting November 8/9 in Geneva.

The next meeting of the IUT working group will take place in Berlin, January 9/10. **Lukas Siebenkotten**, general director of the German tenants Association (DMB) and **Reiner Wild**, director of the Berlin Tenant’s Association (BMW), will bring in their expertise in the question of “rent stabilization and control”.

The Brussels meeting was followed by a two days meeting of the new IUT executive committee consisting of **Sven Bergensträhle**, **Jan Laurier**, **Annika Wahlberg** and **Barbara Steenbergen**.

Meeting of the EU Housing Partnership in Glasgow, September 20-21

Main topic of the meeting was the presentation of two scientific studies on the financing of affordable housing in the old and new member states of the EU. The studies of Professor Kenneth Gibbs (University of Glasgow) and Jozsef Hegedüs (Metropolitan Research Institute Budapest) show obstacles and solutions for the bundling of national and EU financing for affordable housing supply.

IUT was represented by **Sven Bergensträhle** and **Annika Wahlberg**.

The study of Gibbs looks at housing dimension including affordability, access and homelessness. It also discusses sources of non-affordability, land availability, supply delivery blockages, lack of public finance, economic and demographic pressures, inflexibility or lack of choice. It looks at financial options such as equity recycling, state guarantees and mutual insurers.

The paper also discusses challenges including lack of incentives to move from social to affordable housing, inequality, displacement, gentrification, energy efficiency and the long-lasting effects of the financial crisis. It also suggests remedies and recommended policies, and analyse responses and innovations, such as those in Austria, France, Spain, Ireland, Finland, Scotland and the Netherlands.

The study of Hegedüs focuses on housing policies after transition, tenure structure, housing finance, management of multi-unit buildings and housing the poor. It also gives an overview of existing housing provision models and subsidy schemes.

Its aim is to seek to build robustness in housing systems which suffers from vulnerability from wider economic and financial shocks and will provide a mechanism to pool evidence and share experience internationally. The hope is to build long term stability for subsidies, regulatory measures, social security and planning.

A discussion will continue over the months to come. The proposals will be part of the final report of the EU housing partnership.

Day two of the conference was held in the town centre and the group was addressed by **Susan Aitken** who is the leader of the Glasgow City Council and **Deborah Smith**, Scottish Government (and Deputy Director of the More Homes Division).

They informed of their targets which include 50,000 affordable homes over the coming 5 years, 35,000 of which will be for the rental market, that they ended the “right to buy” scheme in 2016 and that the Scottish government continues to oppose Brexit.

Their work focus areas include, house prices, mortgage lending, sustainable housing,

greater diversity, equality of standards regardless of type of housing, energy efficiency, full use of technology, people with disabilities should be able to live independently, sustainable communities, organic approach – mixing incomers with existing resident, diversity in terms of geography and culture and a social and private building mix. They are now trying to attract millennium youth (who have different needs and wants from housing) and trying to increase the city centre residential units, particularly for the large student population. (AW)

New CoR-Initiative report of Hicham Imane: “Towards a European Agenda for Housing”

“The lack of affordable housing has become one of the most worrisome issues of social inequality in many European cities and the economies in the EU pay some € 195 billion per year for inadequate housing costs²”, stressed PES member **Hicham Imane**, Member of the Charleroi Municipal Council (Belgium).

His opinion³, received an overwhelming support by COTER committee members at their meeting September 27. It reiterates the Committee of the Regions (CoR) call for setting a European agenda on housing. This would ensure a better coordination between the EU and the Member States' policies and between their regions and their local

² <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/news/spotlight-on/quality-of-life/eurofound-report-highlights-cost-of-inadequate-housing>

³ <http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/opinions/pages/opinion-factsheet.aspx?OpinionNumber=CDR%201529/2017>

authorities. The rapporteur advocates for a more effective use of the EU's funding instruments in addressing the housing crisis and calls for a housing investment which is eligible under the future post 2020-cohesion policy in order to better respond to the diversity of local needs. He underlines the need to link all the housing-related work already done in relation to the EU's Urban Agenda, to the Pillar of Social Rights, the State Aid for Services of General Economic Interest, the Energy Efficiency Package and to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.



Hicham Imane (PES) and **Barbara Steenbergen** (IUT) at the CoR meeting

As president of the largest social housing association in Wallonia, La Sambrienne, **Imane** is a professional when it comes to affordable housing supply. The initiative report will be voted in the CoR plenary November 30, 2017.

IUT at the European Urban Forum in Prague

The European Urban Forum was held in Prague on 13 October 2017 and IUT were invited by the Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic and to the

international workshop held the day before on “Housing Estates, what’s next”?⁴

The main goal of this international conference was meeting at working level to have an open discussion on ways to effectively reach the commitments contained in the UN and EU approved documents relating to housing and urban development issues in 2015 and 2016. The conference also provided opportunities to share experiences, visions and looking for possible synergies of activities in strengthening the cooperation between UN and EU in urban development and housing in the pan-European region of the UN Economic Commission for Europe Member States.

IUT was represented by **Sven Bergensträhle** and **Annika Wahlberg**, who also had the opportunity to meet up with **Milan Taraba** and **Lenka Tarabová** of the Czech Union of Tenants SON.

The debate on the first day focused on large housing estates and whether to demolish refurbish and/or infill and densify when they reach the end of their lifecycle.

Experts from the UK, Slovakia, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Netherlands presented innovative solutions from their respective countries.

In the excellent report by “Justspace”,⁵ which has been prepared collaboratively and where the tenants have been given a voice, the UK authors pointed out that shops and high streets were dying and many commercial properties were now being converted to residential units. IUT liked that fact that in

⁴ <http://www.dotaceeu.cz/getmedia/79e9fb2f-efd8-4fe7-8411-02e34ffb4706/European-Urban-Forum.pdf?ext=.pdf>

⁵ <https://justspacelondon.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/just-space-a4-community-led-london-plan.pdf>

most schemes, residents' involvement was high on the list of priorities.



Involvement of residents is crucial

On the second day a report around some key facts and a study of the 183 cities within the UNECE area was presented. UN Habitat were represented and commented on the fact that one year after the Habitat III implementation is still being discussed, which illustrates the difficulties in turning words into practical action. It must be member states and regional actors, cities and local governments that implement.

Questions arose on how to include very diverse subnational governments and other actors such as mayors/director of national organisations in planning and implementation processes.

The UN 2030 Agenda⁶ must be linked with the New Urban Agenda⁷ as the New Urban agenda is not legally enforceable. (AW)

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<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

⁷ <http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/>

Agreement to the EU Pillar of Social rights

On 23 October, the EU Council of Ministers for Social Affairs has reached an agreement to the “European pillar of social rights.” The draft includes a number of policy areas in the field of employment and social policy. Overall, target values are defined in 20 areas. The pillar of social rights shall act as a reference document. Labour market and social standards in the Members States shall approach in the long term the level defined in the pillar.⁸ IUT and its members participated intensively in the procedure by delivering opinions to consultations and by various contacts with Commission, parliamentarians and relevant stakeholders at EU and national level, because housing is regulated in article 19. The following text is to be adopted on 17 November in Gothenburg during the EU Social Summit:

“19. Housing and assistance for the homeless

a. Access to social housing or housing assistance of good quality shall be provided for those in need.

b. Vulnerable people have the right to appropriate assistance and protection against forced eviction.

c. Adequate shelter and services shall be provided to the homeless in order to promote their social inclusion.

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en#chapter-iii-social-protection-and-inclusion

Housing Europe presents flagship report “State of housing in the EU 2017”

Alice Pittini from the Housing Europe Observatory, the research branch of Housing Europe, presented on October 17 the 2017 edition of its report ‘The State of Housing in the EU’ in a one day conference in Brussels.⁹



Main findings: Although growth has returned to big parts of our continent, as President Juncker stated at his recent ‘State of the Union’ speech, this growth is leaving many behind and our societies are increasingly unequal. Similarly, the recent ‘recovery’ in housing markets is far from benefitting everyone and the state of housing in the European Union today remains critical.

- Housing has become the highest expenditure for Europeans and overburden rate remains stable at high level, hitting disproportionately harder the poor.

- House prices are growing faster than income in most Member States, while inequality and housing exclusion are mutually reinforcing.

- Territorial divide is alarming, as finding adequate and affordable housing in places where job opportunities are, is increasingly hard.

- As the level of housing construction is still low, especially major cities face a structural housing shortage reinforced by recent waves of migration.

- Political response to Europe’s housing challenge remains poor, a fact reflected in increasing levels of homelessness. Only cities that are at the forefront of the housing crisis are showing a more prominent role in finding solutions.

Housing Europe President, **Cédric van Styvendael** commented: “There is no better indicator than housing to help us do a reality check. Just one month after the ‘State of the Union’ by President Juncker I regret having to deliver the message that Europe’s housing challenge is still prevalent and addressing it requires political will at all levels and investment on what already works on the ground. Housing is no field for sorcerer’s apprentices”.

Berlin meeting on the EU Urban Agenda

In a meeting of the “German Association for housing, urban development and spatial planning” October 13 in Berlin, representatives of four EU Urban Agenda partnerships, “integration of refugees and migration”, “digitalisation”, “urban mobility” and “affordable housing” presented the current status quo of their work. The German federal level was represented by **Tilmann Buchholz** of the ministry for building and environment, the city level by the Urban

⁹ <http://www.housingeurope.eu/resource-1001/a-state-of-housing-map-of-europe>

Envoy of the Dutch ministry of interior affairs, **Nicolaas Beets**.

The chair of the meeting, **Hella Dunger-Löper**, long-time State Secretary for urban development and Europe of Berlin, contributed as member of the “Committee of the Regions” decisively to the launch of the EU Urban Agenda.¹⁰ She stressed that it is necessary to formally implement the cities in the European legislative process and achieve a better position for urban development in the EU institutions.



Barbara Steenbergen presenting the housing partnership

Dr. Volker Löwe, head of the Berlin representation in Brussels, and **Barbara Steenbergen** stressed the need for a good interweaving of the Urban Agenda work, presenting the first results of their partnerships “integration of refugees and migrants” (Berlin) and “affordable housing” (IUT). Goal is to achieve a level playing field with the EU commission in the future cohesion policy negotiations. The results of the partnerships would have to be discussed by the EU council to achieve a formal political implementation, commented Steenbergen.

¹⁰ <http://pes.cor.europa.eu/news/pages/Dunger-Loeper-urban-plenary.aspx>

Flemish tenant association claims for institutional participation of tenants

The situation of tenants in Belgium is far from rosy. Massive pressure on rent prices, gentrification in the cities, poor legal protection of tenants, only 6.5% social housing and an ownership rate of 65% characterize the stressed housing market.

In this precarious situation, the Flemish tenants association launches an offensive for more structured and institutional tenant participation. In a symposium of the University of Antwerp on October 19 jointly organized by the tenants association and the association of social housing providers, more than 100 participants from tenant initiatives, landlord representatives, policy and science met to debate the controversial theme.¹¹

Barbara Steenbergen presented the “European Responsible Housing Code of Conduct”¹² for more tenant’s participation and answered the critical questions from Flemish policy and housing associations. “Reform in Flanders is overdue, since tenants initiatives are neither financially nor legally protected. The social housing providers should go ahead as a role model and provide a reliable framework for tenant participation”, demanded the Flemish tenants association.

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Barbara Steenbergen, head of EU office

¹¹ <http://huurdersplatform.be/vhp/actualiteit-vhp/lokale-bewonersparticipatie-verslag-studienamiddag/>

¹² http://www.responsiblehousing.eu/en/upload/ERHIN_Outputs/Code%20of%20Conduct_EN.pdf