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# A new deal

Fresh ways to boost affordability are needed across Europe

Life is hard for owners and tenants alike across Europe. According to ECA International, house prices rose by almost 50 per cent in Sofia, Bulgaria, in the year to May 2008, by 33 per cent in Poland and 11 per cent in Sweden.

Moscow had the biggest rental increases in Europe this year, up by 50 per cent for a two-bedroom flat. New police officers in Oslo, Norway, may have to pay 60 per cent of their salary for rent, also for a two-bedroom flat.

Reports from offices around the world say that they are having difficulty recruiting key workers

because of unaffordable housing.

Several cities around the world are developing schemes for new affordable housing, aimed at workers in the public and service sectors. But construction is slow, the numbers are too few and often become too costly in the end. Many cities leave it to the market to solve, like in Oslo. But let's face it - the market is not interested in building for middle or low income households.

Hundreds of thousands of people are waiting for affordable and decent housing in Europe, in close proximity to job opportunities. Breadwinners want to be back home

in time for tea and to say good night to their children; politicians want the workforce to be 'flexible'.

But they have to give us the possibilities. On International Tenants' Day earlier this month, the International Union of Tenants held an open seminar in the European Parliament in Brussels.

MEPs and representatives from a wide range of European housing non-governmental organisations stressed the necessity of a new deal in housing, to increase the output of affordable housing in Europe. *Magnus Hammar is secretary general of the International Union of Tenants*