



Liaison office to the EU

Report from Brussels June/July 2008

News from policy and legislation

A) European treaty- what's next?

The Lisbon treaty which is expected to replace the constitution of the EU should be set in force in January 2009. Precondition is that all Member States ratify the treaty. Ireland was the only country to hold referendum on ratification of Lisbon treaty. On 12 June, 50% of Ireland population voted against of it, as this country would have to make changes to the constitution if this treaty takes effect.

Meanwhile the treaty was signed by 21 of 27 Member states. In Germany, the Czech Republic and Poland the ratification process is slowed down. The first two countries deal with constitutional complaints of citizens against the Lisbon treaty which have to be decided by the superior courts. In Poland a controversial national political campaign is going on. Next to sign the treaty are Italy and Sweden.

The EU-strategy how to deal with the Irish refusal is not quite clearly. There will be no direct sanctions against Ireland – but the model of a “**two-speed Europe**” is currently discussed again- with Ireland moving into the slow lane.

B) French presidency

The French EU presidency started on 1st of July- ending December 31. All major events can be followed on the website <http://www.ue2008.fr/PFUE/lang/en/accueil>. One topic is the ratification of the Lisbon treaty and consequences of the Irish referendum. This is directly linked to the future policy of a more social Europe which was picked up by President Sarkozys presidency slogan of a “**more protective Europe**”.

According to this political motive the **informal housing ministers meeting in Marseille, November 24-26** will be concentrated on “Access to housing for persons with difficulties finding housing on the market”. The **first draft communiqué** was confidentially handed out to us- and will be discussed in the IUT-EU advisory board and at the IUT-board meeting October 2008 in Brussels (enclosed). During a meeting with our French member CNL in Montreuil, June 25 a basic IUT-Brussels/CNL-strategy was discussed.

Second housing related topic of the French presidency is the **energy- and climate policy**. France is intending to final the EU-level negotiation process of the EU-commissions climate and energy package (see Brussels report April/May 2008). The **renewable energy directive** is one of the legislative measures. More than 1.400 amendments have been sent to the EU-rapporteur Claude Turmes MEP, one of them from IUT concentrating on obligatory energy efficiency measures when refurbishing a building (enclosed). These amendments are

currently resumed and translated by the committee secretariat. The parliament is going to decide about the renewable-directive in the plenary begin October. In his Blog from July 4 EU-commissioner Andris Piebalgs underlined the EU-priority of energy-efficiency. <http://blogs.ec.europa.eu/piebalgs/a-good-start-for-the-french-presidency/>.

A second legislative measure of the EU is to create more transparency about the energy performance of housing. The public consultation of the EU-commission on the **new energy performance of buildings directive (EPBD)** ended June 20. The IUT statement is concentrating on transparent energy certificates for tenants (enclosed). The first draft of the new directive will be launched by the EU-commission at the end of 2008.

A high level symposium on sustainable housing under the patronage of the EU-commissioners Andris Piebalgs and Danuta Hübner and the French housing Minister Christine Boutin is held on **September 18**, Brussels. IUT is invited to speak.

C) Social package of the EU-commission- effects on housing policy

EU-commissioner Vladimir Spidla on Wednesday, July 2, presented a comprehensive social package that ranges from **anti-discrimination laws** to health care abroad to labor rights. After Ireland's clear No to the European Union's reform treaty last month, Brussels is looking for ways to win back the support of the people. Ensuring equal rights regardless of skin color, gender, sexual orientation, religion and handicaps is the main thrust of the package. Wheelchair users and blind tenants, for example, should be given access to all shops and services. And employers and landlords should be legally bound not to discriminate when selecting employees or tenants. The new measures, which have yet to be put into effect by the individual member states, go well beyond the bloc's existing handful of anti-discrimination laws, passed several years ago. Nearly everything that the European Commission proposed on Wednesday has already been made law in Germany by the current governing coalition, and the country has been praised in Brussels for being at the fore in anti-discrimination legislation. Nevertheless, conservative voices are concerned that the social package will simply mean more expensive bureaucracy from Brussels. It cost Germany 1.73 billion euros to implement its current set of anti-discrimination laws. **The EU-social package will be implemented when it is approved by Member States, presumably at the end of 2008.**

IUT was invited by the **European Anti-Poverty Network** to chair a 2-days workshop on housing during the 7th EU meeting of people experiencing poverty in Palais Egmont, Brussels. With a clear vote of the 120 participants and the support of the EU-commission we were successful in implementing some of our IUT-housing policies into an **official document from the Slovenian EU-Presidency to the Council of the European Union** (enclosed, see pages 5/6). As a result, EU-commissioner Spidla published a call for tender for a study on 'Housing exclusion: welfare policies, housing provision and labour markets'. This is the first time the EU-commission puts a clear link between the European cohesion policies and housing. A first step, but no game easy to win: French President Nikolas Sarkozy has already made it clear however, that social policy won't be a top priority during his country's EU presidency. Issues like the reform treaty, immigration, defense, climate change, and energy supply will take center stage.

D) IUT-events and activities

The **IUT-petition** on the rights of the sitting tenants in Central and Eastern Europe is online. You can sign the petition on www.iut.nu. Please help us collecting signatures by disseminating the information.

The **IUT-conference “Decent and affordable housing in the European Cities”** will start on the occasion of the International Tenants Day 2008, October 6, 2008 9-13 am in the European Parliament in Brussels. We’ll have a plenary room for 120 people. The conference is for free, participants only have to pay their travel costs. Please forward this first invitation to your national members.

E) Press articles:

Inside Housing:

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/story.aspx?storycode=6500402>

Woonbondig, magazine of the Nederlandse woonbond (enclosed).

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