

The IUT Position on Housing Matters within the European Union

1. Housing is a fundamental human right

- 1.1. “The IUT and its member organisations call for the right to housing, adequate shelter and other measures to improve the living conditions for tenants. The right to quality, affordable and accessible housing is a universal human right which must be legally enforced in the constitutions and legislation of all countries. Governments must commit sufficient resources to realise this right and wealthier countries should provide resources to those that are in need of such”. (The Tenants’ Charter),
- 1.2. The Universal Declaration of Human rights (UN Assembly 1948) states that "Everyone has their right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being for himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing, and the medical care and necessary social services. (Article 21.1),
- 1.3. The European Social Charter adopted by the Council of Europe Article 31 states that “Everyone has the right to housing”. The parties of the Charter are to promote access to housing of an adequate standard, prevent and reduce homelessness with a view to its gradual elimination and to make the price of housing accessible to those without adequate resources for access to other rights and to a life with dignity,
- 1.4. In its Charter of Fundamental Rights the EU states that ” In order to combat social exclusion and poverty, the Union recognises and respects the right to social and housing assistance so as to ensure a decent existence for all those who lack sufficient resources, in accordance with the procedures laid down by Community law and national laws and practices.” (Article 34).

2. A key factor for welfare, social inclusion and economic growth

- 2.1. The absence of decent housing affects the citizens in several ways; health and even survival, child-rearing capacity, choice of education, healthcare and employment. The provi-

sion of housing is part of the welfare system of many Member States and the obligation of society to provide decent housing is part of public law or even of their constitutions. It is thus considered essential to the welfare of the citizens that the state through various measures engages in the provision of housing so that every citizen is guaranteed a decent housing,

- 2.2. Decent, affordable and sustainable housing is one of the key factors in combating social exclusion and unemployment, making towns, cities and regions better places in which to live and work, encouraging harmony within and between communities and also in working to meet sustainable development goals,
- 2.3. Decent, affordable and sustainable housing is of outmost importance for the functioning and growth of the economy, which is dependant on a high degree of labour mobility. The provision of decent, affordable and sustainable housing is thus of great importance for success of the Lisbon process.

3. Rental housing has an important role for society and citizens

- 3.1. “A well functioning society needs a variety of dwellings in regards to size and standard, for different needs and stages of a person's life. It must be up to a person's own choice whether he or she wishes to own or rent the dwelling” (The IUT Tenants’ Charter),
- 3.2. Rental housing has many benefits to the citizens; it is easy to move into and move from and is of great importance to labour mobility; there is no need invest personal savings, which instead can be used for economically more productive aims; rental housing can play a major part in urban renewal and in economic and environmental sustainability,
- 3.3. Society needs, in order to avoid segregation and social exclusion, a sufficient number of rental flats owned by the state, municipality or other institution allocated for this purpose. Public and/or social housing should be one important part of housing in every society (The IUT Tenants’ Charter).
- 3.4. Private rental housing is a complementing and valuable form of rental housing - but needs to be regulated in legitimate agreements when it comes to, tenancy agreements and responsibility of services and repairs (The IUT Tenants’ Charter),
- 3.5. Rents have to be set at an affordable level. Rents should be in reasonable proportion to the income. Rents should be set in participation with the tenant or/and his/her tenant organisation (The IUT Tenants’ Charter),

- 3.6. A person or household should have Secure Tenure so that they are protected from involuntary removal from their residence, except in exceptional circumstances (The IUT Tenants' Charter),
- 3.7. Tenants must have the right to participate in decision-making processes through their organisations (The IUT Tenants' Charter).

4. Subsidiarity should prevail

- 4.1. To provide Decent, affordable and sustainable housing to all its citizens is a responsibility of The Member States. The provision of housing is not included in the Treaty,
- 4.2. The provision of decent, affordable and sustainable housing is best met on a national, regional or local level where the needs of the citizens are readily recognizable,
- 4.3. The Member States are involved in the provision of housing in various degrees and there is a great variety in how The Member States have chosen to meet with this responsibility. In many Member States housing policies are deeply rooted in an institutional framework that has been elaborated during many decades to fit the preconditions of each Member State and its political and institutional setting,
- 4.4. The European Union and the Member States attend to the implementation of these fundamental social rights in accordance with the measures of the Treaties and respecting the national regulations and practices. Whilst recognizing the need for commitment of the European Union to the importance of decent, affordable and sustainable housing this should be done respecting the Member States' policies on housing.

5. The IUT sees a role for the EU in housing matters

- 5.1. The European Union and the Member States should recognize the need for social considerations, of which housing is a part, in its decisions,
- 5.2. The European Union and the Member States should attend to the effective implementation of the fundamental social right to housing mentioned above respecting the Member States' policies on housing, regulations and practices,
- 5.3. The European Union and the Member States should recognize the role of housing in social inclusion and in supporting social and economic growth as well as in securing the welfare of the citizens through decent, affordable and sustainable housing,
- 5.4. The European Union and the Member States should create a function for monitoring the fulfilment of the right to housing, the development of housing in the Member States and

to conduct best practices studies on housing and related matters,

- 5.5. The European Union should include housing as an important element of any EU urban policy,
- 5.6. The European Union should give the concept of social housing a broad definition so that it not only includes those operators providing housing to families and persons in need, but also to those persons and families that have difficulties finding housing on the commercial market. Further the concept should include those social housing operators that have social inclusion and urban renewal on their agenda,
- 5.7. The European Union should adopt a Framework Directive on Services of General Interest recognizing the role of housing in welfare, in supporting social growth and sustainability, recognizing the principle of subsidiarity, giving the concept of social housing a broad definition,
- 5.8. The European Union and The Member States “have the responsibility to guarantee and safeguard that there is no discrimination on the housing market, on racial, religious, national, sexual orientation or other grounds” (The Tenants Charter).