



April 2016

## IUT at Prague Habitat III meeting

The IUT participated in the Habitat III Europe meeting in Prague, where it held a side event on affordable housing. Furthermore, IUT was involved in the UN advisory committee for the **Prague declaration**, a strategic document which rests on four key principles: innovation, environmental sustainability, inclusiveness and good governance.<sup>1</sup>



IUT team in place at the UN Habitat III, European regional conference in Prague

## Housing Partnership formally launched

As part of the implementation of the EU urban agenda, Barbara Steenbergen, head of IUT liaison office to the EU, participated in the second meeting of the **partnership on housing**, 18-19 February. As one of the four pilots of the EU Urban agenda, this partnership will explore ways how to guarantee affordable housing for European citizens. The partnership is composed of the Netherlands and Slovakia, Luxembourg, Latvia and Slovenia, as Member States; Riga, the Scottish Cities Alliance and Vienna as cities; Eurocities, the **International**

<sup>1</sup><http://www.europeanhabitat.com/2016/03/29/prague-declaration-approved-during-the-european-habitat-brings-the-formula-for-future-urban-development/?lang=en>

**Union of Tenants on the consumer side** and AEDES and Housing Europe on the provider side; several Directorates General of the European Commission and the European Investment Bank.<sup>2</sup>



Director General Mrs. Elena Szolgayova from Slovakia and Dutch Urban Envoy Mr. Nicolaas Beets in Prague (Source: urbanagenda.nl)

Housing on the EU urban agenda was also the main theme of **European Housing Forum's** last meeting, attended by Hugo Mussou. Judith Torokne (DG REGIO) gave a presentation on the actions undertaken as part of the housing partnership, aimed at improving knowledge, legislation and funding.

## Second edition of European Responsible Housing Awards – call for entries launched!

On 22 February, Housing Europe, the European Federation of Public, Cooperative and Social Housing, has launched the **“Housing 4 All” campaign**<sup>3</sup> with three special guests: the IUT, The Guardian and MEP Javi Lopez from S&D.<sup>4</sup> The

<sup>2</sup> <http://urbanagenda.nl/eu-urban-partnership-on-housing-presented-at-habitat-iii-european-meeting-in-prague/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.housingeurope.eu/resource-530/housing-for-all>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/125042/JAVI\\_LOPEZ\\_home.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/125042/JAVI_LOPEZ_home.html)

campaign aims to gain political support for boosting the supply of affordable homes in Europe. It will generate policy recommendations on issues related to migration, energy, urban policy, housing finance and EU regulation on SGI.

Housing Europe's campaign is closely linked to the **2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the European Responsible Housing Awards launched on 14 March by Delphis, Housing Europe and the IUT.**<sup>5</sup> This shows a clear commitment of the sector towards social responsibility and innovation in housing.

## Social issues

Hugo Mussou participated in the Semester Alliance meeting on **“proposals to make Europe 2020 more social, democratic and sustainable”**, held on 1<sup>st</sup> March. AGE platform pointed out that the issue of cuts in social spending (including housing) should be tackled as this is increasing inequalities in Europe; Jean Lambert MEP (Greens) added that access to affordable and quality services should be a priority of EU policies. Green Budget Europe highlighted that support to buildings' energy efficiency needs a coherent and sustainable EU approach.

Davide Lanzillotti, IUT policy officer, participated in the **Social Platform** task force on services, March 2<sup>nd</sup>. He highlighted that investing in housing-related services is crucial today if we want to achieve social cohesion and reduce rising inequalities. EU member states are actually disinvesting in social housing and this trend should be reversed if we want to achieve social cohesion and reduce rising inequalities. «Investment in services should be considered by decision-makers as investment in people and for the future» said Valentina Caimi, coordinator of the Social Platform task force and senior officer. In line with that, the IUT joined the Social Platform campaign on **“investing in services”**. The aim of the initiative is to build the case for more action in this field through a publication providing evidence of

positive outcomes of investing in services, including social housing.

## European Investment Bank goes for housing

The IUT joined the conference How Europe's towns and cities can address current **refugee crisis** held at EIB Brussels office on 6 April. Jan Olbrycht MEP, moderator of the conference, mentioned that the debate in the Parliament is about the possibility of a «punishment» for those Member states that do not accept refugees e.g. in the form of reduction of structural funds. Gerry Muscat said that European Investment Bank can finance up to 100% of housing projects for refugees, however only in the form of loans. The first loan ever for refugee housing was recently handed out to the German Land Brandenburg, 120 million €. <sup>6</sup> Barbara Steenbergen asked whether investment in social housing and housing for refugees should not be accounted in the 3% Maastricht deficit criteria, but the panel did not answer this sensitive question. Hella Dunger-Löper (state secretary of Berlin, committee of the regions) said that it is necessary to connect the issue of refugees with the “better regulation” agenda of commissions' Vice President Frans Timmermans, to ensure better coordination among Member States and exchange of information and best practices.



From left to right, Gerry Muscat (EIB), Jan Olbrycht MEP, Hella Dunger-Löper (state secretary Berlin)

<sup>5</sup>[http://www.iut.nu/EU/Responsible\\_Housing\\_Awards\\_2016\\_PressRelease.pdf](http://www.iut.nu/EU/Responsible_Housing_Awards_2016_PressRelease.pdf)

<sup>6</sup><http://www.eib.org/infocentre/press/releases/all/2015/2015-309-eib-hands-out-first-ever-loan-for-refugee-housing-to-promotional-bank-ilb-in-germany.htm?lang=en>

Ms. Dunger-Löper launched the proposal of a European Commission White Paper for EU action in this specific area. Berlin is member of the Urban Agenda partnership for migration and refugees.

## New National Housing Bank in Austria

A new national housing bank will be set up to guarantee a smooth financing of 30.000 social and affordable housing units to be built in Austria until 2022. Total costs are 1400 million €, the **European Investment Bank** is asked to contribute with 700 million €. The loan is still under appraisal.<sup>7</sup>

## Energy issues

On 25 February, the IUT participated in the European Commission workshop “**Delivering a new deal for energy consumers**”. As a follow up to the communication issued last summer<sup>8</sup> DG Energy organised a series of meetings with stakeholders, this one being concentrated on “metering and clear billing”. The European Commission sees metering as the best way to reduce energy consumption. **Mariell Juhlin**, Chief Economist of the Swedish Union of Tenants, pointed out that individual metering in Swedish rental housing actually produces the contrary effect.



On the left, Mariell Juhlin (SUT Chief Economist)

«Give individual meters to tenants and you will get higher indoor temperatures. This is because **Sweden** has a system of gross rent, in which the landlord pays the heating bill and manages the building temperature. This system, coupled with the traditional Swedish rent negotiation, has proved to ensure affordability and prevent energy poverty. Investment should be channelled towards energy efficiency improvements, and landlords should take on responsibility for such investment».

The IUT Brussels office met **Woonbond** on 26 February to discuss a common research project on energy. The idea is to identify solutions to the problems of energy poverty and low energy performance in rental dwellings. A few days before, Hugo Mussou participated in a workshop about “scaling up initiatives supporting the energy renovation of buildings” where **Energiesprong** was presented as a replicable model.<sup>9</sup>

The IUT participated in the Eurhonet workshop on **Horizon 2020**<sup>10</sup> held on 9 March, as it has been invited to join a consortium working on a deep renovation “coordination and support action”. The aim of this project is to analyse the state of play and identify solutions for overcoming the barriers to deep renovation e.g. split incentives and long payback periods.

March 14<sup>th</sup>, Davide Lanzillotti participated in the DG Energy stakeholder **meeting on the review of energy directives**, where it stated that energy investment should not be concentrated on metering but on concrete improvements like insulation and ventilation systems. Furthermore, he said that energy performance certificates should be clearly displayed in multi-apartment buildings as this would raise awareness of both prospective and new tenants. The Commission is working on draft legislative proposals which will be presented in September.

On March 17<sup>th</sup> the IUT participated in the joint EBC-UIPI joint event on “**Retrofitting the private**”

<sup>7</sup><http://www.eib.org/projects/pipeline/2015/20150693.htm>

<sup>8</sup><https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/news/new-electricity-market-consumers>

<sup>9</sup><http://energiesprong.nl/transitionzero/>

<sup>10</sup><https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/>

**housing stock**".<sup>11</sup> The debate was concentrated on how the (Juncker) Investment Plan may be used to aggregate small scale renovation projects. "Picardie pass renovation" was presented as best practice in the field. It is a technical and financial assistance programme of Picardie Region, ensuring a balance between project costs and energy savings.<sup>12</sup> However, this model does not seem to ensure the same balance in a rental property scenario.

## Other news

On the occasion of World Consumer Day which falls every year on March 15<sup>th</sup>, the IUT published a **press release on housing and health**. The text highlights the importance of investing in adequate housing as a way to prevent health problems and to more efficient public spending. Striking figures lead to believe that investing in affordable and healthy housing is an overall gain for society.<sup>13</sup>

The IUT Brussels office received many messages of solidarity from its member unions and partner organisations on the days following the **tragic events of March 22<sup>nd</sup>**. Our solidarity goes to the families and friends of the victims.



Messages and flowers after the Brussels bombings

## Welcome



Hugo Mussou, Degree in geography and Master in Urban Planning, started an internship at IUT Brussels office end of February. Hugo's expertise will serve IUT for the "Responsible Housing Awards" and several ongoing initiatives.

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<sup>11</sup>[http://www.ebccconstruction.eu/fileadmin/Publications/Press\\_releases/2016/2016\\_03\\_18\\_EBC\\_UIPI\\_event\\_on\\_Juncker\\_plan.pdf](http://www.ebccconstruction.eu/fileadmin/Publications/Press_releases/2016/2016_03_18_EBC_UIPI_event_on_Juncker_plan.pdf)

<sup>12</sup><http://www.pass-renovation.picardie.fr/laccompagnement-du-service-public/>

<sup>13</sup>[http://www.iut.nu/EU/World\\_consumer\\_day\\_2016\\_statement.pdf](http://www.iut.nu/EU/World_consumer_day_2016_statement.pdf)