

EU and affordable rental housing

Advocacy for tenants in Brussels

Barbara Steenbergen

Head of IUT liaison office to the EU

barbara.steenbergen@iut.nu

EU housing ministers meeting

IUT President and IUT Head of EU office at the last EU housing ministers meeting in 2013.

Agreement on the need to support **new financing methods for affordable housing** + prevention policies to **reduce rate of evictions in Europe**



IUT recommendations to the Members of the European Parliament for 2014-2019



Tenants' Milestones for the new European Parliament 2014-2019

The Social Dimension of the European Urban Policy - Tenants make cities!

- 1) Everybody should have the right to affordable and decent housing- the right to housing is a fundamental right**
- 2) EU state aid rules must favour investment in affordable rental housing - the allocation of social and affordable rental housing has to be decided at Member States' level**
- 3) Fight energy poverty: ensure that enough EU-public funding is committed to make energy-efficient housing affordable for low and middle-income groups**
- 4) Tenure neutral policies – redirect funding towards affordable rental housing**

Social housing and the EU (I)

- ❖ EU state aid rules: **social housing only for “disadvantaged citizens”**
- ❖ **IUT: violation of the principle of subsidiarity, limitation of target group undermines social mix, middle income groups need access to affordable housing too, marginalization of the social housing sector**
- ❖ 27% tenants in in EU spend more than 40 % of their net income on housing
- **Striving to change EU definition:** Parliamentary reports and decisions of EU stakeholders supporting us: Committee of the Regions (CoR), European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), European Parliament (EP), Federal council of Germany (Bundesrat), Dutch Parliament, Austrian association of cities and towns, EUROCITIES, mayors of European big cities
- Theme of the **EU housing partnership**

Social housing and the EU II

- ❖ CoR: **petition signed by 250 local authorities** claiming their freedom to determine social housing target group
- ❖ EESC: **adoption of an opinion on social housing definition**
- ❖ European Parliament: **initiative report** asking for **clarification of the definition + minimum quota of social housing in dense cities**
- ❖ EUROCITIES (network of big EU cities) policy statement asking for the **deletion of “disadvantaged citizens”** from EC decision 2012/21/EU
- ❖ Resolution of **mayors of 30 European capitals and big cities** claim to **leave the type of social housing provision at state, regional and local level.**
“We comply with important stakeholders such as Housing Europe, the federation of public, cooperative and social housing, and **IUT, the International Union of Tenants.**”

European Semester

EU stability and growth pact

- ❖ EU stability and growth pact: Member States submit **national reform programs** to European Commission (EC) every year
- ❖ EC issues **Country-Specific Recommendations** which should contribute to reach **Europe 2020 targets** i.a. lifting 20 million people out of poverty
- ❖ *Is this actually the case?* EC asked the Netherlands to **downsize** social housing sector, and Sweden to **deregulate** rental market
- ❖ **IUT** seeks to influence EC officials; strategic partnerships with MEPs to promote a more “social” semester
- ❖ Maastricht criteria: 3% threshold of deficit to GDP barrier for national housing investment programs
- ❖ IUT claim: Allow a “**golden and silver rule**” for social investments like housing- theme of the **EU housing partnership**

Energy legislation (I)

- ❖ Building sector is central to energy transition as it represents 40% of final energy consumption
- ❖ IUT claim: **energy transition should be affordable for tenants**
- ❖ In **21 European countries** renovation costs may be passed on to the rent!
- ❖ IUT claim: **total housing costs should not increase after energy renovation**
- ❖ Prevent “**renovictions**”

Energy legislation (II)

- ❖ **Guaranteed energy savings** and long term public investment in energy efficiency → best solution to fight energy poverty
- ❖ **IUT replied EC consultation** on the evaluation of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive → raising awareness of tenants through energy labels and their display in multiple storey buildings; strengthening the link between energy performance and rent prices; providing larger long term public funding

EU funds for affordable housing

- ❖ Regional development funds (ERDF): up to 20% for energy efficient **refurbishment** of housing
- ❖ Funds for strategic investment EFSI: EC + European Investment Bank (EIB) guarantee for **private projects** on housing and energy
- ❖ EIB lending for urban renewal and **social housing** projects as well as **housing for refugees**

EU urban agenda and housing partnership

- ❖ Goal of urban agenda: involve cities in the design of urban policies at EU and national level- **crucial for housing policy**
- ❖ 12 priorities → 12 European partnerships
- ❖ **IUT nominated member of the housing partnership:** ensure affordable housing for citizens
- ❖ 3 principles: better knowledge, better funding and better regulation- **remove barriers at EU and national level**
- ❖ 3 working groups: competition and state aid, finance, general housing policy. IUT is nominated as rapporteur on **security of tenure, tenant participation and rent stabilization mechanisms**



ERHIN

- ❖ European Responsible Housing Initiative – **first European Corporate social responsibility initiative for housing**
- ❖ **European Declaration on responsible housing and CSR Code of Conduct** for the housing sector
- ❖ **European Awards held every 2 years:** rewarding best companies “providing more than a roof over people’s head”
- ❖ IUT chairs the jury, tenant jury members from DE, FR, NL
- Next awards: **November 23, Brussels**
- **Join us to learn more from inspiring projects for tenant’s empowerment!**

IUT EU bullet points

- ❖ Create **EU state aid rules** in favour of social housing
- ❖ Allow a **golden and silver rule** in the EU fiscal compact
- ❖ **Energy efficiency** only pays if it is affordable for tenants
- ❖ Optimize **national long term financing** of affordable housing by EU funds
- ❖ Tenant's empowerment is the key- **European Responsible Housing Awards** for outstanding social landlords
- ❖ **EU housing partnership** – first high level stakeholder group to remove barriers for more supply of affordable housing
- ❖ **barbara.steenbergen@iut.nu**