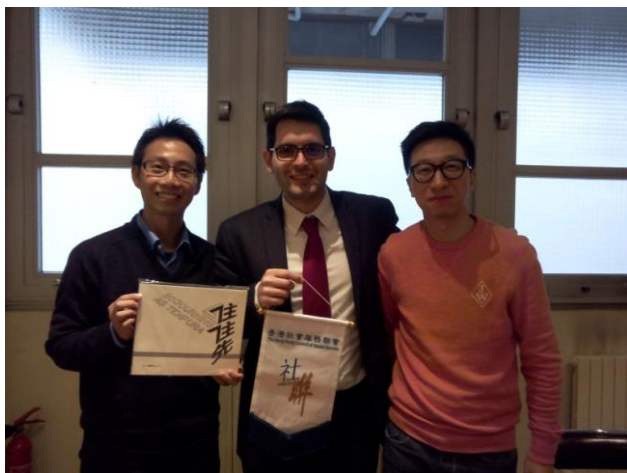




**December 2015**

## Meeting with Hong Kong social NGO

Davide Lanzillotti, IUT policy officer, met a delegation from the **Hong Kong Council of Social Service**<sup>1</sup> on October 19 at CNL premises in Paris. The Council gathers social service agencies in the Region, working also on rental housing solutions. Davide introduced them to the activities of CNL and IUT. He explained the financing models of social housing in Europe, especially the French model. The delegates have a stake in the existing forms of rent regulation in Europe, as Hong Kong private rents are far from being affordable.



Davide Lanzillotti with representatives from the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, Paris

## Visit from Denmark

On October 23rd, a group of Danish students from the **Herlev Gymnasium** visited IUT Brussels office.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of their visit was twofold: to become familiar with the work of international NGOs and as a part of the school orientation towards academic studies. The students were very interested in IUT

work, particularly in issues related to financing, structure and influence on European and international policies.

## Vulnerable Consumer Working Group: focus on tenants

Davide Lanzillotti participated in the meetings of the Vulnerable Consumer Working Group on 21 October and 10 December. He gave a presentation on energy efficiency and “split incentive” in the rental market. He pointed out that EU policies tend to ignore the vulnerable condition of tenants in the private rented sector. «A big percentage of households falling into this category spend more than 40% of their income on housing costs, including energy». He also criticised the misleading definition of the split incentive barrier at EU level. «Energy refurbishment opens the door to rent increases therefore it should not be seen as a cost borne by the landlord only. The tenant may be considered as beneficiary insofar as his/her total housing costs do not increase after energy improvements. How to achieve this outcome? There is no “one-size-fits-all” solution, but rent regulation may play an important role in solving the issue. In countries like the Netherlands and Sweden, different forms of rent regulation have created the conditions for promoting energy refurbishment while keeping housing costs affordable for the tenant. At the same time, the role of public authorities in facilitating agreements between tenants and landlords associations is crucial e.g. like for the Dutch covenant on energy savings».

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hkcss.org.hk/e/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.herlev-gym.dk/>

## EESC hearings on the new EU Urban Agenda

Barbara Steenbergen, Head of IUT representation to the EU, intervened in the European Economic and Social Committee's hearings on the **role of civil society in the EU urban agenda**, October 30 and December 14 in Brussels. She highlighted the importance of affordable housing and social mix in European cities, an objective which is undermined by current SGEI rules. «The target group of social housing should be adapted to local needs; cities and regions are in a better position than the European Commission to decide on that. The EC needs to review its practices in the field of state aid in order to facilitate investment in affordable housing and promote social cohesion»<sup>3</sup>.



Steenbergen also highlighted the necessity to review the EU deficit criteria of the European semester. Investment in social infrastructure like social housing should be excluded from the 3% deficit threshold for member states and cities.<sup>4</sup> The main goal of the EU urban agenda is to involve cities in the design of policies at EU and national level, and to mobilise them in the implementation phase. The EESC is invited by the Dutch presidency of the EU (January-July 2016) to report on behalf of the civil society. Rapporteur is Mr. Roman Haken from

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-urban-agenda-presentations>

<sup>4</sup> <http://orf.at/stories/2314389/>

the Czech Republic. The adoption is foreseen for the EESC plenary session of 17-18 February 2016.<sup>5</sup>

## Expert workshop at Vienna House: perspectives on EU framework for social housing

High-level experts from European housing sector met November 13 at the Vienna House Brussels to discuss the **future challenges of social housing in Europe**. The event was co-organised by the Brussels offices of the International Union of Tenants and of the City of Vienna.<sup>6</sup> It gathered experts from the municipal, social and cooperative as well as private housing sector, cities and regions and their associations as well as representatives from the European Commission, the Council, the European Investment Bank and other financial institutions.



The participants in the conference at Vienna House Brussels

Following the method of the “world café”, the participants provided their inputs on different subjects: housing and country-specific recommendations; the impact of EU competition policy on social housing; financing models in cities, regions and states; and the role of EU funds in social housing construction or retrofitting. Several needs emerged from the discussion: a more socially-oriented European Semester and macroeconomic governance e.g. by taking into account affordability indicators and excluding investment in social infrastructure from the 3% deficit threshold; a state aid legislation which does not limit social housing to the poorest, but promotes social mix and inclusion;

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.news.37895>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.wien.gv.at/english/business/eu-strategy/social-housing-wokshop.html>

the necessity to focus on object subsidies and setting an earmarking for social housing in public budgets; the need for dedicated financial instruments and intermediaries like specialized social housing banks or funds which make the link with EU instruments as well. Barbara Steenbergen: “The legislative and financial proposals elaborated to solve bottlenecks at European level can be used as blueprint for the work of the new EU urban partnership on housing.” The full report of the conference is available on the IUT website.<sup>7</sup>

### **New EU Urban Partnerships 2015-2018 IUT nominated**

Barbara Steenbergen is nominated to participate in the new EU Urban Partnerships for Housing. The group consists of 15 members. 13 members are coming from national governments, cities and regions, European Investment Bank, European Commission, and the EU Dutch and Slovakian EU presidencies. IUT and HousingEurope are the two members coming from the sector. The first preparatory meeting took place in the UN Palace of the Nations in Geneva, December 16. The constitutive meeting will be held February 18 in Brussels.



Housing Partnership preparatory meeting at the UN, Geneva

The EU Urban agenda will focus on **12 key priority themes**, and will address the major challenges for which integrated actions are needed at different levels. Two important cross cutting issues will be urban planning and the availability and quality of public services of general interest e.g. social

<sup>7</sup>[http://www.iut.nu/EU/Social\\_housing\\_workshop\\_Nov13\\_2015.pdf](http://www.iut.nu/EU/Social_housing_workshop_Nov13_2015.pdf)

housing. A focus will be put on “**better regulation**” i.e. changing rules that hinder local action (state aid and social housing). Each of the 12 priority issues will be covered by a partnership which will work on an action plan in the next 3 years. The Dutch Presidency will strengthen the urban dimension of EU policies. In a “**Pact of Amsterdam**”, the action plans of the Urban Partnerships will be officially endorsed by the ministers for urban development in May 2016.<sup>8</sup>

### **Europe housing forum: need of affordable housing for the young**

IUT President Sven Bergenstråhle participated in the **Europe Housing Forum** on 18-20 November in Berlin.<sup>9</sup> The conference, organised by **Habitat for Humanity**, gathered housing experts from around the world to discuss issues of housing affordability in times of growing economic pressures. It focused also on the impact the refugee crisis also have on Europe’s housing challenges. In Germany alone homes will have to be found for one million refugees in the next few months, whilst social housing construction is decreasing since decennia. On the occasion of the Forum, Habitat launched its **Housing Review 2015**,<sup>10</sup> which points out the need to build affordable housing for young adults, immigrants and keyworkers.

### **Joining forces with CNL on SGEI**

Davide Lanzillotti attended the “pole Europe” of the CNL on November 30<sup>th</sup>. This working group focuses on European and international affairs with the aim of strengthening the link between CNL (French tenants association) and the IUT. The two organisations will organise a joint action on March 15<sup>th</sup>, World Consumer Day, on the theme of “housing and health”. Furthermore, they will cooperate especially on the revision of future EU

<sup>8</sup> [http://urban-intergroup.eu/wp-content/files\\_mf/presentatuionnicolaasbeets.pdf](http://urban-intergroup.eu/wp-content/files_mf/presentatuionnicolaasbeets.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <http://ecahousingforum.eu/service-2/downloads/>

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.habitat.org/sites/default/files/housing\\_review\\_2015\\_full\\_report\\_final\\_small\\_reduced.pdf](https://www.habitat.org/sites/default/files/housing_review_2015_full_report_final_small_reduced.pdf)

directives on energy and legislation concerning state aid to social housing companies.

### **IUT at SWL sector conference on social housing financing**

Barbara Steenbergen participated in the sectoral conference of Société Wallonne du Logement (Walloon Housing Federation)<sup>11</sup> on 2<sup>nd</sup> December in Mons. SWL organized a day of training for their employees. Main theme of the event was the financing of social housing in Europe. Barbara gave a presentation on the German model, highlighting the necessity to increase the new construction of affordable housing and strengthen the not-for profit and cooperative housing providers.

### **IUT at symposium of German housing cooperatives**

On invitation of the German housing cooperatives<sup>12</sup> Barbara Steenbergen introduced the **European Code of Conduct for responsible housing**<sup>13</sup> to the audience in Berlin, November 26. The cooperatives will discuss if they support this code.

### **Responsible Housing: support needed for Awards' second edition**

As a follow up of the **ERHIN project**,<sup>14</sup> Delphis and Housing Europe joined again forces with the IUT to organise a second edition of the European Responsible Housing Awards. The aim is to keep up the momentum for CSR actions in the sector. Responsible housing does not mean only housing people in need, but also providing them with services and opportunities, creating social value and improving European neighbourhoods. It is all about social innovation, inclusion and participation. In light of the tragic events which took place in Paris last month, these should be key objectives of European policies. The project partners will raise

support of housing providers and other stakeholders to ensure continuity in the action.

### **EP: increasing focus on housing costs**

The IUT Brussels office sent amendments to the European Parliament's initiative report "Meeting the antipoverty target in the light of increasing household costs". The rapporteur is Hungarian MEP **Tamás Meszerics (Greens/EFA)**, member of the European Parliament's committee on Employment and Social Affairs. The IUT put a stronger focus on housing, which was a bit missing in the original text, and on solutions to overcome the split incentive between tenants and landlords. The report is scheduled to be voted on in the committee in February 2016.<sup>15</sup>

### **IUT at Eurocities' housing and state aid working group- new policy line adopted**

Barbara Steenbergen had an intervention in the common meeting of the Eurocities housing and state aid working groups on November 12th. Eurocities is the network of big cities in the EU. Participants agreed on a new policy line with regard to EU state aid rules: demanding the deletion of the definition of social housing which targets "socially disadvantaged citizens" only, in order to promote new construction of social housing and to increase social mix in European neighbourhoods.

### **City of Vienna workshop**

Barbara Steenbergen gave a speech at the internal workshop of officials of the city of Vienna and the Austrian council of cities in Vienna, December 9. Participants specialised in public procurement and state aid questions discussed relevant cases in the housing sector.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.swl.be/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.wohnungsbaugenossenschaften.de/>

<sup>13</sup> [www.responsiblehousing.eu](http://www.responsiblehousing.eu)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.responsiblehousing.eu/en/>

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocEDURE.do?lang=&reference=2015/2223%28INI%29>