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European Responsible Housing Awards Ceremony 2016 ♦♦♦ New social housing law in Czech Republic in the starting blocks ♦♦♦ New energy package ♦♦♦ Davide Lanzillotti leaving IUT

European Responsible Housing Awards 2016 – policy meets practice

The European Responsible Housing awards ceremony was held on 23 November in the Committee of the regions. The event, organised by IUT and Housing Europe, was attended by more than 120 participants including housing providers, EU and national authorities, financial institutions, NGOs and universities. The ceremony aimed to reward social innovation in housing and share best practices with a diversified audience consisting of European and national stakeholders.

The day was split in two parts.

In the first session, moderated by Sorcha Edwards (SG Housing Europe), the housing stakeholders had the possibility to listen and exchange with two high level speakers, Mr Georg Fischer (Director Social Affairs, DG EMPL) and Mrs **Elena Szolgayova** (Chair of the EU housing partnership). Elena took an active part in the **Habitat III** conference which was held on 17-20 October in Quito, Ecuador.¹ She said that the European idea of urban development and governance is shared by other regions in the world. *«The fact that cities are core drivers of development and should be recognised more access to policy*

¹ <https://habitat3.org/>

*making is an idea which is prominent in the EU urban agenda».*² As part of this, Elena acknowledged *«the key role IUT is playing in the EU housing partnership³ by representing the view of the consumers»*. Unfortunately, *«EU policies and decisions do not always have a positive impact on national housing policies, and this is the case for competition law. The purpose of the housing partnership is to influence those policies and give them the good direction. The European Responsible Housing Awards make a good link between policy making and best practices on the ground»*.

Georg Fischer (Director DG EMPL) stressed that the EU has no direct competence in housing policy, *«however it can support Member States through different programmes»*.



From left: Elena Szolgayova, Georg Fischer, Barbara Steenbergen, Sorcha Edwards

² <http://urbanagendaforthe.eu/>

³ <http://urbanagendaforthe.eu/partnerships/housing/>

Furthermore, the EU can promote best practices and finance research in specific fields. He mentioned the EASI project and the Belgian “housing first” approach which is now tested in other countries through ESF support. He also highlighted the increasing role that the European Investment Bank is playing in the finance of affordable housing. Questioned about the **European pillar of social rights**,⁴ Mr. Fischer said that *«the idea behind it is to bring together economic and social sustainability. It is about identifying the policy principles which should guide Member States in the development and implementation of their social policies»*.

Criticism was raised by several stakeholders. **Ronald Paping** (Nederlandse Woonbond) stated that *«the EC policy is not helping but undermining the provision of social housing in the Netherlands»*. **Ruth Owen** (FEANTSA) pointed out that the Commission’s Annual Growth Survey⁵ is focusing on housing prices only, which do not capture the full picture and notably the worrying trends in housing exclusion. **Barbara Steenbergen** (Head of IUT liaison office to the EU) asked why the social pillar is promoting homeownership for low and middle income, a policy which has created severe damages in the recent past. **Georg Fischer** stated that *«the European Commission does not bear the responsibility of the Dutch housing crisis, which has more profound origins»*. He said that the Commission is open to the advice of the civil society concerning the new social pillar and that the current outline may still be changed (the public consultation runs until the end of this month).⁶ Finally, he congratulated the

⁴http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/towards-european-pillar-social-rights_en

⁵http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/annual-growth-surveys/index_en.htm

⁶<http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/towards->

organisers of the Awards, which *«give good dynamics to the development of inclusive and sustainable housing policies»*.

The second session dedicated to the Awards was open by **Karl Heinz Lambertz**, first Vice-President of the Committee of the Regions. *«The idea of the award to exchange knowledge and best practices developed by actors on the ground fundamentally corresponds with our institution’s efforts and missions to echo what happens out of Brussels in cities and regions»*.



Karl Heinz Lambertz, first vice president of the Committee of the Regions

Mr. Lambertz added that the ceremony comes at a particularly decisive point of time as several EU processes connected to social housing will become highly topical in 2017. *«One of the major problems is the question of investment in relation to the growth and stability pact criteria. A solution could be to exclude social investment in infrastructure from the **3% criteria**.⁷ The second issue to tackle is the current narrow definition of social housing in the regulations for state aid and SGEI. In order to guarantee a **healthy social mix** in cities, social housing has to be accessible not only to the poorest but also to middle income households»*. The position of Mr. Lambertz is fully supported by the IUT.

⁷http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/economic-governance/sgp/index_en.htm

Barbara Steenbergen, head of EU office and chair of the European Responsible Housing Awards jury presented the background of the initiative. The European Responsible Housing Initiative project (ERHIN) – which ran between 2013 and 2014 – is at the origin of the Awards.



Barbara Steenbergen, Head of IUT EU office

«*The European Responsible Housing Initiative is the only CSR agreement in the housing sector at European level, supported not only by the two main parties, the social landlords and the tenants, but also a wide range of EU key stakeholders and real estate professionals. It led to the signature of two key documents, the European Declaration⁸ and the CSR Code of Conduct⁹*». Barbara highlighted the political value of the first, which promotes responsible housing policies in EU regions, and the practical value of the second, which has been signed by more than 50 housing associations who implement its principles in their daily work.

The European Responsible Housing Awards aim to showcase this excellent work and this

⁸<http://www.responsiblehousing.eu/en/Responsible-Housing/European-Declaration-on-Responsible-Housing/>

⁹<http://www.responsiblehousing.eu/en/Responsible-Housing-CSR-Code-of-Conduct/Code-of-Conduct/>

year they rewarded housing companies from 4 different countries:

- ✚ **Goedkope Woning** from Kortrijk (Belgium) for the project “Venning Eco LIFE” in the category Local Social Sustainability – *Watch the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pduf9tUkVlw>*
- ✚ **ICF Habitat La Sablière** from Paris (France) for “An innovative coupling to tackle energy precariousness” in the category **Environmental sustainability** – *Watch the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7wfy0Ce5jo>*
- ✚ **Shepherds Bush Housing Group** from London (UK) for their project “Big Conversation” in the category Good governance and fair relations with stakeholders – *Watch the video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3_9yrGrsd8*
- ✚ **Gewobag Wohnungsbau-AG Berlin** from Germany for their “Vocational training – key factor for successful integration of refugees” in the responsible HR management category – *Watch the video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMmzDN1i_g*

The four winning projects answer different **contemporary challenges**: the ageing population and the need for sustainable solutions (“Venning ECO life”); energy efficiency vs. affordability for weak groups (“An energy coupling to tackle energy precariousness”); the lack of tenant’s participation at level playing field and the need for residential democracy (“Big conversation”); the refugee crisis and how to turn it into training and employment opportunities for all (“Vocational training – key factor for successful integration of refugees).

Venning ECO life is a complex project of neighbourhood regeneration carried out by Goedkope Woning in Kortrijk, Belgium. Venning was a deprived area which now comprises 196 social dwellings and is the first CO2-neutral neighbourhood in Flanders. The adaptation of the living spaces to the needs of elderly and disable people was very much appreciated by the jury as well as the considerable reduction in CO2 emissions and energy costs for the tenants.¹⁰



Goedkope Woning team

«Being selected as the winner of this group of high-level, interesting and inspiring projects means a lot to us. The Award Ceremony was an excellent platform to meet kindred spirits on international level». **Ilse Piers**, Director Goedkope Woning.

ICF Habitat’s **“Innovative coupling to tackle energy precariousness”** shows how it is possible to achieve huge energy savings in a residential complex built in the 60s through the combined use of available technologies. A hybrid system of cogeneration and heat pumps for hot water led to significant energy savings for the tenants without increasing the rent. The estate was upgraded from an “E” to a “B” energy performance indicator, which was possible through the thermal

¹⁰<http://www.b2ai.com/nl/nieuws/detail/woonwijk-venning-in-kortrijk-meest-sociaal-duurzame-wijk-van-europa>

rehabilitation deep renovation and use of renewable energies.¹¹



ICF Habitat team with Barbara Steenberg (IUT)

«The ICF Habitat team that participated in the award ceremony greatly appreciated. It is a sign of recognition of all the work done daily by ICF Habitat employees to innovate and develop new services for tenants». **Franck Olivéro**, Innovation and Process Director, ICF habitat

The **“Big conversation”** is a best practice in residents’ involvement. Each year Shepherds Bush HG hires a camper van to visit locations across west London and call on residents in its 5000 homes. The conversations shape services according to the exact needs of the tenants and let SBHG offer support to its more vulnerable residents.¹²



Jane Sheehan and Russell Caller, SBHG

«I was thrilled to be part of an event with people who share my passion for social

¹¹<http://www.icfhabitat.fr/groupe/laureat-trophees-europeen-logement-responsable>

¹²<https://www.sbhg.co.uk/news/european-housing-award-2016-1844>

housing and involving tenants. Our staff were very excited to see the award and share in the celebrations – with staff visiting me at my desk to share in the news and hear about the event». **Jane Sheehan**, Intouch manager and organiser of the Big conversation, SBHG.

“**Vocational training**” by Gewobag Berlin is an integration project for refugees which includes 6 to 12 months internships, mentorships, language courses and diversity training sessions.¹³ It is a best example of social inclusion programs carried out by housing companies which clearly shows that responsibility in this field goes beyond the mere provision of “a roof over people’s head”.



Gewobag Berlin team including project beneficiaries

«We are very proud that our efforts and the commitment of our staff are also appreciated beyond the borders of Berlin. It shows that we are on the right path. Getting the ERHIN Award is an honor as well as an incentive for us to continue the project and thus to offer refugees professional prospects and to encourage further companies to engage in such an engagement». **Martina Heger**, Head of HR Department, Gewobag Berlin.

The **runners-up** in the different categories are listed below.

¹³ <https://www.gewobag.de/presseinfos-gewobag-erhaelt-internationale-auszeichnung-fuer-integrationsprojekt-143,455,18.html>

Local social sustainability

Woonbedrijf (Eindhoven, Netherlands)

Pro Potsdam (Potsdam, Germany)

Örebrobostäder (Örebro, Sweden)

Est Métropole Habitat (Villeurbanne, France)



The finalists in Local social sustainability

Environmental sustainability

Uppsalahem (Uppsala, Sweden)

Örebrobostäder (Örebro, Sweden)

Vivienda y Suelo de Euskadi (Vitoria, Spain)

Habitat 62/59 (Coquelles, France)



The finalists in Environmental sustainability

Good governance and fair relations with stakeholders **Paris Habitat** (Paris, France)
SDH (Echirolles, France)
Helm Housing (Belfast, UK)
FSM (Melun, France)



The finalists in Good governance and fair relations

Responsible HR management **Groupe 3F** (Paris, France)
Paris Habitat (Paris, France)
Vivienda y Suelo de Euskadi (Vitoria, Spain)
Habitat 62/59 (Coquelles, France)



The finalists in Responsible HR management

Barbara Steenbergen as chair of the Jury explained that it extremely hard to choose the winners in the different categories, and this was notably the case in “local social sustainability” and “responsible HR management” where a second ballot was

needed. The **European Responsible Housing Awards Jury** consisted of: **Eddie Jacquemart** (CNL President), **Ronald Paping** (Director Nederlandse Woonbond), **Conny Reuter** (SG Solidar), **Sander Scheurwater** (Director corporate affairs RICS Europe), **Klaus Niederländer** (Owner Greenminds, formerly Director Cooperatives Europe), **Gyorgy Sumeghy** (Advocacy Manager Habitat for Humanity), **Orna Rosenfeld** (Professor at Sciences Po Paris), **Claire Roumet** (Director Energy Cities), **Andrea Colantonio** (Senior economist European Investment Bank), **Heike Zuhse** (Scientific advisor Deutscher Mieterbund). In the closing panel debate with the four award winners and **Elena Szolgayova** the participants highlighted that it is possible to answer the major housing challenges of these times if housing associations take their social and economic responsibility for the residents seriously and turn it into concrete actions: «*Why isn't all rental housing like that-these examples should be the rule, and not the exemption*», Barbara Steenbergen (IUT) concluded.¹⁴

Housing conference in the Czech Senate – a new social housing law in the starting blocks

The IUT participated in a housing conference in Prague, organized by the Association of Tenants of the Czech Republic (SON) together with the Council of Senior citizens.

Elke Hanel-Torsch from the Austrian Union of Tenants (MVÖ) and **Barbara Steenbergen** from IUT presented the Austrian model of housing for senior citizens and European best practices, approved by the European Housing

¹⁴ <https://storify.com/HousingEurope/european-responsible-housing-awards-2016>

Forum. There is a **political momentum** that finally, after years of negotiations and debates the Czech government coalition of the Social Democrats, the Movement ANO (YES) and the Christian and Democratic Union will decide on the law. At the moment it is negotiated between the several responsible ministries, a complicated process of competing management. The process has to be speeded up as a new government will be elected in autumn 2017. Steenbergen underlined that it is necessary to concentrate for social housing solutions not only for the poorest, but also for low income households as pensioners and senior citizens. This is crucial to prevent ghettoization and areas without basic services. **Zdenek Pernes** from the council of seniors stated that small size flats from **30-50 m² are needed, with access to social services and capped rent prices, maximal on third of the disposable income.**



Elke Hanel-Torsch (MVÖ) Barbara Steenbergen (IUT) at the Czech Senate

The conference was attended by 170 participants and the ministers **Michaela Marksova** (Labour and Social Affairs) and **Karla Slechtova** (Regional Development). **Milan Taraba**, president of the Czech Union of Tenants, appealed to find a solution for a new fair and balanced social housing law in the Czech Republic- the time is now!

European Commission issues new energy package – what’s new for tenants?

November 30, the European Commission published the « **Clean Energy for All Europeans** » proposals. It is a comprehensive package of policy proposals amending the existing EU energy legislation. «The Commission wants the EU to lead the clean energy transition, not only adapt to it. For this reason the EU has committed to cut CO2 emissions by at least 40% by 2030 (...). Today’s proposals have three main goals: putting energy efficiency first, achieving global leadership in renewable energies and providing a fair deal for consumers».¹⁵ The Commission also wants to raise the binding energy efficiency targets to 30% by 2030, which is higher than the 27% EU leaders had agreed in October 2014, but lower than the 40% advocated by the European Parliament. The package is rather big to “digest”, but at first glance it is clear that it includes policy proposals which the IUT needs to discuss and react upon. Some highlights and comments on three important legislative proposals follow.

Concerning the proposal amending the **Energy performance of buildings directive**,¹⁶ there are several provisions which deserve attention. The Commission is inviting Member States to improve the **inspection of technical building systems** through the use of electronic monitoring (art. 14 par. 3). If on the one hand this could improve the performance of the technical systems, on the other hand it could entail new operating costs for the tenants. Another controversial provision is the link between financing for energy

¹⁵<https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/news/commission-proposes-new-rules-consumer-centred-clean-energy-transition>

¹⁶http://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/documents/1_en_act_part1_v10.pdf

efficiency measures and energy savings achieved, to be determined by comparing the Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) issued before and after the interventions (art. 10 par. 6). It is not clear how this principle will work in practice e.g. if this will not discourage upfront investment or penalise the funding of gradual improvements (vis-à-vis deep renovations). When Member States put in place a **database for registering EPCs**, this should contain the actual energy consumption data of **buildings frequently visited by the public** with useful floor area of over 250 m². Still concerning the EPCs, the Commission intends also to strengthen the **independent control systems** and the parameters for calculation, certification and **minimum energy performance requirements** «to be set out and applied consistently» (recital 16). The framework for the calculation of the energy performance should be updated with the European Committee for Standardisation (recital 17). Member States should set out a «roadmap with clear **milestones and measures** to deliver on the long term 2050 goal to decarbonise their national buildings stock, with specific milestones for 2030» (article 2, par. 2). Furthermore, «the long term renovation strategy should contribute to the alleviation of **energy poverty**» although there is no common definition of the problem at EU level. To guide investment decisions, the Commission asks Member States to **aggregate projects, de-risk energy efficiency operations** and **use public funding** to leverage additional private-sector investment. The IUT asked for more transparency concerning the energy performance of public buildings, strengthening the reliability of EPCs and a bigger role for public funding. Some provisions seem to go in the right direction.

Regarding the Commission's proposal amending the **directive on energy**

efficiency,¹⁷ the Commission is stressing the importance of the principle of cost-effectiveness (recital 2) and that only “net savings” generated by the energy efficient measures may be counted in the overall figure (recital 9). There is a stronger focus here on consumers affected by energy poverty in the form of an **obligation to include social aims** in energy savings measures (article 7). This provision was strongly advocated by the IUT as part of DG ENER's Vulnerable Consumers Working Group. «The work carried out by Vulnerable Consumers Working Group during the last year was a very important input into the Commission's work on energy poverty and features prominently in the Commission communication. We would like to express our sincere gratitude for the IUT work and kind cooperation» (DG ENER). Concerning **metering**, final customers for district heating/cooling should be supplied with competitively priced meters which «accurately reflect the final customer's actual energy consumption» (article 9a). In **multi-apartment buildings** with central heating or cooling source (or supplied from district heating/cooling) individual meters should be installed. When their use is not technically feasible or where it is not cost efficient, **individual heat cost allocators** may be the alternative, «unless it is shown by the Member State in question that the installation of such heat cost allocators would not be **cost efficient**». The text leaves some room for exceptions, but also for litigation between the Commission and Member States. However, this is only a first step in the legislative process: the text has to be negotiated with the two deciding bodies i.e. the Parliament and the Council.

Interesting provisions on self-consumption¹⁸ are included in the proposal for a **directive on**

¹⁷http://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/documents/1_en_act_part1_v16.pdf

¹⁸ Self-consumption refers to the use of power

the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources. For instance, recital 53 highlights the «need for a definition of renewable self-consumers and a regulatory framework which would empower self-consumers to generate, store, consume and sell electricity without facing disproportionate burdens. Collective self-consumption should be allowed in certain cases so citizens living in apartments for example can benefit from consumer empowerment to the same extent as households in single family homes». ¹⁹

A big thank you to Davide Lanzillotti !



After a period of almost five years, **Davide Lanzillotti** has to leave the IUT EU office due to budget cuts. Davide started his work in 2012 assisting to organize the IUT contribution to the UN World Urban Forum in Naples, Italy. He took part in the political negotiations leading to the initiative report of the European Parliament on social Housing in the EU in 2013, the “Delli-report” as well as in the IUT lobby in the election phase of the European Parliament 2014. He was closely involved in the debate on state aid and the definition of social housing based on the Dutch and French case. Analysing the rent law and the regulations on energy efficiency, he became an active member of the EU commission’s “vulnerable consumer working group”, emphatically advocating for the protection of tenants against “renovictions” and the affordability of energy efficiency for the residents. From 2013 on, he was IUT

coordinator of the European Responsible Housing Initiative, resulting in a sector agreement on Corporate Social Responsibility and the European Responsible Housing Awards 2014 and 2016. **Davide Lanzillotti** is author of the “**EU guide for tenant unions**” and the European Housing Forum Publication “**Active Ageing and intergenerational Solidarity- the role of Housing**”. He contributed with many articles to the “Global Tenant” and the IUT Brussels newsletters. In 2015 and 2016, Davide worked part time for the **French union of tenants CNL** in Paris, contributing to their national strategies on European affairs, consumer policy and energy efficiency. He was also consulting the **Dutch Union of Tenants Woonbond** from 2015-2016 on energy efficiency policy, holding seminars for their members and staff. Davide contributed to the preparation and documentation of the IUT congresses in Krakow and Glasgow and the several workshops, board meetings and conferences organized by the IUT Brussels office. Barbara Steenbergen: «*Throughout the years, Davide gained first-hand experience and detailed knowledge on European Affairs, lobbying and housing policy. Representing an NGO in a small lobby office in Brussels is a school of hard knocks. As IUT policy officer, he became a real all-rounder, covering the comprehensive lobby work, the EU-project management and the organisation of high level European events. The IUT Brussels office will definitely miss his expertise, support and personal commitment. We wish him every success in his future - both personal and professional.* **Davide Lanzillotti**, speaking fluently three languages, holds a Bachelor in international relations and two Master degrees in European studies.

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and/or heat generated on the premises
¹⁹http://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/documents/1_en_act_part1_v7_1.pdf