



February 2016

EU urban agenda: moving forward



Housing and urban development are at the centre of the **Dutch presidency of the Council**, which will run until June 30th.

Under the EU urban agenda, the presidency has launched the following **four pilot partnerships**:

Housing, coordinated by Slovakia and joined by the IUT; air quality, coordinated by the Netherlands; inclusion of migrants and refugees, coordinated by the city of Amsterdam; and urban poverty, coordinated by Belgium and France. Each partnership should not last more than 3 years and will look at 3 main issues: better regulation; better use of financial instruments; and better knowledge exchange.¹ Next meeting of the housing partnership will held in Brussels, February 18th.



Susanne Caarls, coordinator of the Dutch EU-presidency and member of the housing partnership

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) has recently published a study on the “**growth potential of the urban agenda**”. Social housing is acknowledged as an important policy lever, a public incentive to job generation, and «one of the most effective public investments in order

¹ <http://urbanagenda.nl/>

to contain poverty risks»².

CoR members from the commission for territorial cohesion policy and EU budget (COTER) commission and MEPs from the Parliament’s committee for regional development (REGI) came together to discuss the development of the EU urban agenda, January 26th in the European Parliament. «20% of Europeans are spending more than 40% of their income on rent and **demand for social housing has soared** while building has decreased. Answering these questions about how an EU Urban Agenda will help cities tackle poverty and create jobs is vital».³

Davide Lanzillotti participated in the **urban innovative actions** (UIA) seminar held on January 13th in Brussels. UIA will be financed by European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and based on the **12 topics** set by the EU urban agenda.⁴ The objective is to test new solutions which address issues related to sustainable urban development. Eligible entities for funding are local administrative units of more than 50.000 inhabitants, or associations of local authorities. There is no need to establish transnational partnerships, the main criteria being **territorial contiguity** and a limit of three urban authorities involved. **Local tenants unions** could join those partnerships with a status of “delivery partners”.

² http://cor.europa.eu/en/documentation/studies/Documents/Growth_potential_integrated_urban_agenda.pdf

³ <http://cor.europa.eu/en/news/regional/Pages/developing-the-eu-urban-agenda-in-2016.aspx>

⁴ <http://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/12-topics-for-a-better-urban-environment>

EIB loan to Dutch social housing corporation

For the first time in history, the European Investment Bank has signed an agreement with a social housing corporation, **Portaal**. It is about a EUR 200 million credit facility to be used for energy retrofitting and new energy-neutral homes.⁵

Energy efficiency in rental housing, IUT at the Joint Research Center

Davide Lanzillotti (IUT policy officer) participated in the EC workshop “**Unlocking the energy efficiency potential in the rental and multifamily sectors**”, which was held January 20th in Brussels. He presented the problem of split incentives in the rental sector and suggested **balanced solutions** to overcome it. **Adan Martinez-Cruz** from ETH (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zürich) presented the results of a survey on energy efficiency in the Swiss rental sector. According to this research, tenants are willing to pay a higher rent for new windows and housing ventilation systems. During his presentation on “tenancy regulation and energy efficient refurbishment”, **Professor Christoph Schmid** from ZERP (Centre of European policy and law, Bremen) pointed out that «countries with the most efficient regulation and procedures for implementing energy efficiency improvements are those with a socially developed tenancy law, differentiated rental housing markets and a high proportion of non-profit landlords».⁶

HABITAT III regional conference in Prague

The third global UN conference on **housing and sustainable urban development**, “Habitat III”,

⁵<http://www.eib.org/infocentre/press/releases/all/2016/2016-016-portaal-in-zee-met-europese-investeringsbank.htm?lang=en>

⁶<http://iet.jrc.ec.europa.eu/energyefficiency/node/9115>

will be held in Quito, from 17 to 20 October. As part of the preparations of this event, which takes place every 20 years, the **IUT will join** the “**European Habitat**” conference in Prague on 16 to 18 March.⁷ **UN-HABITAT Director Joan Clos** in his visit in Brussels explained that the conference will discuss priorities and recommendations for the review of the UN Urban agenda, which should promote a **new model of urban development**, based on equity, welfare and shared prosperity.⁸



Dr. Joan Clos,
Director of
UN Habitat

European Parliament working on housing and migration

Housing Europe, together with the EP Committee for Civil Liberties (LIBE) held a workshop on housing and migration, January 13th in Brussels. Dutch and Swedish housing companies and representatives of the cities of Vienna, Belfast and Copenhagen presented their approaches to migration. These should be included in an **initiative report** of the LIBE committee, which will be drafted by **Claude Moraes**, S& D MEP coming from London.⁹

⁷ <http://www.europeanhabitat.com/?lang=en>

⁸ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/A-View-from-the-United-Nations-/urbanization-a-source-of_b_8438360.html

⁹ <https://storify.com/HousingEurope/the-communities-of-our-future>



IUT supported by EUROCITIES

EUROCITIES – the network of major European cities – has recently adopted a **statement** on state aid and local public services.¹⁰ The text asks the Commission to **delete the restrictive definition** of social housing which is part of recital 11 of the “SGEI decision” (2012/21/EU).¹¹

Meeting with new director of DG Competition

On January 20th, the IUT had the opportunity to meet with **Henrik Mørch** (DG Competition) and discuss the “**SGEI decision**” (2012/21/UE) and its consequences on social housing allocation in France and the Netherlands. **CNL President Eddie Jacquemart** and **Woonbond Chairman Jan Laurier** explained the problem from the point of view of national tenants associations and presented a common policy paper to the DG competition.

Barbara Steenbergen asked for a review of the Decision, as «this has opened a window to those parties who want to undermine the provision of affordable housing in the two countries». **Henrik Mørch** explained that the Commission will work on a purely **technical revision** this year.

Therefore, **action is needed from national parliaments** to move this dossier forward and turn it into a more political one at EU level. The IUT has put this high in the agenda of the housing partnership.

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¹⁰<http://www.eurocities.eu/eurocities/publications/EUROCITIES-statement-on-state-aid-and-local-public-services-WSP0-A6TS4N>

¹¹<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32012D0021>