



October 2015

IUT Meeting with Šefčovič Cabinet: new approach to energy poverty needed

Following a policy paper sent to Commissioner **Šefčovič**, the IUT met with its Cabinet on 28 August. Main theme of the meeting was **energy poverty**. **Barbara Steenbergen** pointed out that there is a fragmented approach to the problem as well as a lack of communication between different Commission's DGs. «It is necessary to create an "EC taskforce" to address energy poverty in a more consistent and comprehensive way, i.e. building the bridge between climate goals and protection of vulnerable tenants, taking into account the issues of housing affordability and quality». She highlighted that the costs for energy efficiency improvements are passed on to tenants in most European countries. However, rent increases are often much higher than the savings achieved after energy improvements. **Davide Lanzillotti** (IUT policy officer) suggested measures to ban energy disconnection during critical times.¹ The Cabinet mentioned a possibility to have an obligatory counselling between energy providers and consumers threatened by disconnection. This could be an interesting future work field for tenant unions, as they could act as mediator. As part of the Energy union, the Commission will develop a "**Smart Financing for Smart buildings**" initiative

¹ E.g. in France energy disconnection for arrears in bill payments is banned from 1 November to 31 March.

to facilitate access to existing funds, and will come up with a more a holistic approach to the problem of energy poverty.

IUT as major stakeholder in the Energy Performance Buildings Directive

In light of the revision of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD), the **IUT secretariat** set up a process to answer the consultation on the **evaluation of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive**. The **IUT board** meeting agreed on common answers during the board meeting in Amsterdam, October 9. The Board agreed on the following **key messages**: strengthening the link between energy performance and rent prices; harmonization of calculation methods at least at country level; delivery of energy performance certificates to potential tenants and new tenants; display of EPCs in common parts of residential buildings (without distinction public/private); transparency on energy costs (e.g. by handing out last energy bills to new tenants); enforcing the obligation to advertise EPC indicators in commercial media; and the need for public incentives and schemes to meet the goals of the directive. The advice of tenants associations is crucial for the European commission to develop energy policies which meet the needs of the inhabitants, as consumers will be "at the centre of the Energy Union".

Delegation of Bündnis 90/Die Grünen in Brussels

Chris Kühn, housing spokesperson of the party Bündnis 90/Die Grünen in the German Parliament, visited the IUT Brussels office September 15, together with the spokesperson for housing of the green party in the Land Berlin, **Julia Gerometta**. In the centre of the debate were recent developments in European funding for housing and the coming revision of the energy legislation.

EC Forum on heating and cooling

As a follow up to the communication on the energy union package, the Commission held a public consultation of stakeholders on heating and cooling on 9 September. **Davide Lanzillotti** pointed out that the deployment of renewables and energy efficiency should be made attractive and affordable for consumers, especially in the rental sector. «Public authorities and budget should play a role in solving the “**split incentive**” dilemma between the tenant and the owner of a building».

European Parliament puts focus on household costs

The **European Parliament's** committee on Employment and Social Affairs is currently working on its own initiative report “Meeting the antipoverty target in the light of increasing household costs”. The rapporteur is Hungarian MEP **Tamás Meszerics** who has involved IUT in the stakeholders' consultation. The report is scheduled to be voted on in the committee in February 2016.²

²<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheproce>

Juncker plan: France uses money for energy efficiency projects in housing

During his speech on “The State of the Union” on 9 September, **Jean Claude Juncker** announced that «40.000 households all over France will get a **lower energy bill** and 6.000 jobs will be created, thanks to investment fund-financed improved energy efficiency in buildings».³ This will be co-financed by the European Union, the **European Investment Bank** and national banks.

New Economic Foundation invites IUT to Copenhagen conference

The **New Economic Foundation**, an independent Think Tank located in London,⁴ invited 50 European scientists and stakeholders to a 2 days conference to Copenhagen to discuss the progressive economic theories of **Thomas Piketty** in the light of relevant policy fields.

Anders Wijkman, Co-President of the **Club of Rome**, concentrated on the banking sector, **Barbara Steenbergen** gave an input about market failures in housing markets. The New Economic foundation is planning further modules of the non-public events together with the **Copenhagen Business School**.

³ [dure.do?lang=&reference=2015/2223%28INI%29](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-15-5614_en.htm)
Read the full speech of Juncker on http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-15-5614_en.htm

⁴ www.neweconomics.org

Eurofound workshop on social costs of housing shortages

Eurofound, the European foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions,⁵ presented an internal study on the costs of housing shortages to society. Next to the economic aspects, e.g. the problem of finding qualified workers in cities with enormous rents, health related costs caused by badly insulated and run-down buildings were focussed. IUT was asked to give comments to the first results. **Barbara Steenbergen** proposed to also address the problem of unavailable housing for refugees. This view was supported by **Prof. Marja Elsinga**. The study was issued on behalf of the European Commission as a result of the European Parliament report on social housing (**Karima-Delli Report**) and will be published in the near future.

TENLAW final conference: wide consensus on “tenure neutrality”

Davide Lanzillotti participated in the final conference of the TENLAW project in Budapest, on 17-18 September. TENLAW is about a **comparative study** on tenancy law and housing policy in Europe, co-financed by the EU and carried out by a team of academic researchers from different European countries. Davide presented EU policy developments which are affecting national housing policies the most. He promoted and explained the “IUT milestones” i.e. tenure neutrality, “social rent law” and the need for affordable rental housing. The speakers and audience agreed with the need for more **tenure-neutral policies** in Europe as a

way to meet different needs and prevent households’ indebtedness.

Next step of the project team is to come up with recommendations on a “European role in tenancy law and housing policy”. As these are **national competences**, setting up an open method of coordination⁶ (OMC) may be the only possible role for the EU in those matters. The IUT is an observer in the project and will closely follow this debate.

IUT at USH Congress in Montpellier

The IUT was invited to the **76th congress of the USH** (French social housing providers) which took place in Montpellier, 22-24 September, with 20.000 participants. **Barbara Steenbergen** (Head of IUT Liaison office to the EU) participated in a debate on European housing policies and energy renovation in buildings.



Barbara Steenbergen at USH Congress, Montpellier

Barbara pointed out the need to find solutions which do not financially penalise tenants after energy improvements. The current French legislation (*trosième ligne*) does not provide tenants with a **“total housing costs” guarantee**, i.e. the certainty that total housing costs stay the same following a major renovation.

⁵ <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/>

⁶ <http://epthinktank.eu/2014/11/05/the-open-method-of-coordination/>

This concept was stressed again by **Eddie Jacquemart (CNL President)** who added that tenant's empowerment and participation in decision making are essential to achieve sustainable energy renovations in the residential sector.

Referring to the high level of rents in the private rented sector, Barbara said that «the new rent regulation in Paris will not be effective as it is based on already overvalued prices». Therefore «**a coalition of social landlords and tenant associations is needed to lower rents in France**». At the same time «the government has to help social housing landlords building affordable homes and renovating the existing stock». When **President François Hollande** gave the closing speech to the congress, **CNL activists** showed posters that claimed more building subsidies, an electoral promise which French President has not yet met.



CNL demonstration in front of President Hollande, Montpellier

After the congress, Barbara Steenbergen attended the **board meeting of CNL**, where she discussed the influence of EU policies on the French housing sector.

Changes in the IUT Board

The IUT Board met in Amsterdam a day before Dutch Tenants Day. On the occasion, two new members, **Rolf Gassmann (DMB)** and **Mariell Juhlin (SUT)**, were welcomed. **Heidrun Clausen (DMB)** was honoured for eight years of outstanding cooperation with the IUT Board.

Queen Maxima as special guest at Dutch and International Tenants' Day 2015

On the occasion of its **25th anniversary**, the Nederlandse **Woonbond** celebrated the National Tenants Day in Utrecht, October 10th, together with **International Tenants Day**. Woonbond President **Jan Laurier** highlighted that the organisation has grown substantially in its 25 years of existence i.e. from 200.000 to **1.3 million members**. Woonbond currently represents 53% of all tenants in the country.



The IUT board at Tenants Day 2015, in the middle Queen Maxima. Foto: Jan Reinier van der Vliet

Queen Maxima of the Netherlands joined the celebration and had discussions with **Prof. Marja Elsinga, Marc Calon, Barbara Steenbergen and Sven Bergensträhle** on tenure neutral policies. Further to that, they discussed about the “Dutch case” with **Minister for Housing Stef Blok** and **Utrecht Vice Mayor Victor Everhardt**.



Queen Maxima welcomes IUT president Sven Bergensträhle, Foto: Jan Reinier van der Vliet

In the morning session, IUT president **Sven Bergensträhle** asked minister **Stef Blok** to renegotiate the **income ceiling for social housing** with the European Commission, while **Ronald Paping** (Woonbond Director) had a debate with **Marc Calon** (AEDES) on parliamentary enquiry of the Dutch Parliament concentrated on aberrations in Dutch social housing corporations.

In the afternoon, the IUT held an “**International Tenants Café**” with Woonbond members. **Davide Lanzillotti** presented his research for the Woonbond and gave a presentation about energy poverty in Europe and political measures at European and national level. **Sven Bergensträhle** introduced the Code of Conduct for responsible housing⁷ to the audience and encouraged the tenants to ask their landlords to sign it.



Bergensträhle, Paping, Laurier, Foto: Jan Reiner van der Vliet

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http://www.responsiblehousing.eu/en/upload/ERHIN_Outputs/Code%20of%20Conduct_EN.pdf