

International Union of Tenants



Reports from IUT members to the 19th congress on the past, present and future situation for tenants and rental housing



Krakow Poland, 25–27 October, 2013



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C O N T E N T S

Registered delegations to the 19th congress of IUT were invited to present their organization's activities from 2011 up to June 2013. Also, the rapporteurs were asked to describe major challenges, for tenants and for their respective organisations, for the next couple of years.

Finally, we asked about how rental housing is perceived in the countries represented and what role rental housing might have in the future.

Note

The texts published in this book reflects the views of the respective Rapporteur.

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We build societies, not only homes

My three years as IUT President has been three years of firstly getting to know the IUT from within with its variety of members, and secondly getting to know about diverse housing markets. Housing markets and housing policies across the world often rest on history and tradition. What is obvious and taken for granted in one country, is not practiced in another – perhaps even neighbouring – country.

Since the recent congress in Prague, October 2010, I have witnessed an increased attention to the benefits and necessity of public/social housing, amongst Members of the European Parliament and from talks with colleagues in some central and east European countries. While in other countries public/social housing is under threat, like in Australia.

Within IUT, with its many European members, we have become more united during these three years especially concerning the policies of the EU Commission.

The needs and economic status differ very much between households. This is why supply of affordable and decent housing is vital to a society that stands for everyone's right to a good life. But the development in too many countries leads in the opposite direction. Many governments promote only owner-occupancy, as well as privatise and capitalise municipal and social housing.

But, I have also observed that more and more economists, politicians and prominent opinion makers, together with NGOs, have noted the bad consequences of this development and argued for more balanced and social housing policies.

Also, the financial crises have thrown a new light on the benefits of rental housing, when before home ownership was what everyone promoted.

Increased housing shortage leads to higher prices and rents – this is market economy. Decreased housing shortage would stabilize the values and prices of properties.

Housing shortage, bad quality housing and overcrowding hampers the individual's possibility to develop as a human being and limits economic growth. It causes social problems and insecurity together with exclusion and segregation. Teachers, nurses and other key workers who are essential to well-functioning societies become scarce, because they can not find affordable housing in the cities.

IUT further advocates more tenure neutral housing policies, including more neutral taxation policies, which contribute to more stable housing markets and counteract housing price bubbles.

The choice whether to rent or to own should be made possible in all countries. Particularly young and ageing households need this choice.

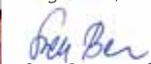
Research has shown that if the level of homeownership is too high in a country, this may seriously hamper the spatial flexibility of the labour force and the economic growth.

Rental housing has a great future if laws and terms are fair. We live in a changing society, where new jobs might not be easy to find in my home town. Rental housing is flexible. When the lease is up, you can just move, without having to wait for a buyer or having to pay transactions costs.

So even if times have been difficult for many tenants there is also a more widespread and stronger opinion for change. These are challenging times for all of us, to unite with all progressive forces!



Ängelholm, in September 2013


Sven Bergensträhle
President
International Union of Tenants

Australia

Tenants' Union of Queensland, TUQ

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About TUQ

Tenants' Union of Queensland was founded in 1988 and provides tenancy advice, casework and education services for residential tenants across the state of Queensland and represents their interests to government and the community.

The TUQ also supports other locally based Tenant Advice Services in Queensland through the provision of training in tenancy and related law, resources for distribution to tenants, and other capacity building mechanisms.

TUQ has about 25 staff, of which many are on short term contracts only until December.

Members of the TUQ are tenants, residents, occupiers of manufactured homes and their supporters. Fees are \$2 per year if you are not waged and \$5 if you are. Members get newsletters and reports but all tenants in Queensland can receive advice whether or not they are members.

TUQ's daily activities are providing advice by telephone and face to face for those who we need to see in person, and

helping to prepare tribunal hearings. As a statewide peak body, we also train and resource workers in other local tenant advices, including a back-up advice service for those workers.

Until recently most of the TUQ's funding was sourced from a small percentage of the interest generated on tenants' bonds, through a program administered by the state government.

During 2011 and the first half of 2012, the TUQ was supported by the Queensland government to develop its role as a peak body to the locally based Tenant Advice Services.

In mid-2012 the entire state program of tenancy advice, the TUQ and 22 local services, was discontinued by the new Queensland government. Since that time the TUQ has been part of a major re-funding campaign – Save Tenant Services in Queensland – along with the local Tenant Advice Services.

In early October 2012 the Commonwealth federal government in Canberra provided a 'one-off' emergency grant for all 23 services for November 2012 to June 2013. As June 30 approached, with no money in sight from the Queensland government, the Commonwealth government again stepped in with another 'one-off' grant for the period July 1 to December 31, 2013. So, this is pretty much where



Queenslander house in Brisbane, typical private rental.

TUQ is right now. Where we are in January 2014 remains to see.

Experiences and outcomes of TUQ's work 2011–2013

The beginning of this triennium started with enthusiasm and service enhancements. Work between the TUQ and the local tenant advice services was aimed at increasing the quality and consistency of services delivered to tenants in Queensland.

However the last 12 months has seen a lot of our energy focussed on securing funding and continued access for tenants to advice and advocacy services.

On the positive side, it is impressive that small services have been able to continue despite twice coming within three weeks of having to make their workers

redundant and close their doors. The commitment of workers to their clients has been commendable.

The new state government also introduced a '3 strikes and you're out' policy as well as Acceptable Behaviour Agreement. At the least serious end, a strike may be constituted by loud noise from a television, stereo or from children. The effect of these policies is yet to take effect and will be worth monitoring to ensure there are no unintended consequences.

In 2011–2012, TUQ was on the program development committee for the National Housing Conference, held in Brisbane in November 2012.

Future challenges for tenants in Queensland and for TUQ

Continued access for tenants to independent tenant advice and advocacy services in Queensland is the most important issue into the future.

Additionally, there is a tenancy law review currently underway and it will be important for informed input from a tenant advocacy group. Without it, input from landlords and real estate agents will dominate the outcomes of the review.

About rental housing future Australia

The private rental market will become more and more important. Public and community housing is becoming increasingly targeted at high needs groups and housing affordability is high. Many households are stuck in the middle in the private rental market (PRM) which in Australia lacks security of tenure and has relatively weak tenancy rights.



Austria

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About MVÖ, and most important activities during 2011–2013.

MVÖ was founded already in 1911, and has today some 70,000 members. MVÖ is financially independent, financed only by membership fees. MVÖ publishes the magazine Fair Wohnen, and a legal jour-

nal – each four times a year. MVÖ offers its members legal support up to the highest court, and useful information via its website, with member's login. MVÖ works as a lobby group in Austria in all possible issues related to rental housing and tenant's rights.

During 2011– 2013 MVÖ took part in the political debate about a major reform on the tenant law which will continue after the general elections in September 2013. MVÖ could reach significant changes in the energy law concern-

ing smart metering of energy consumption. Consumers now have the right to choose if they want to get a smart meter or keep the old Ferraris meter. MVÖ could also achieve improvements concerning rental deposits and broker's commission.

Positive experiences, and outcomes.

In 2011 MVÖ started out with a wonderful 100 year anniversary party from which we gained a lot of energy and publicity which we could invest in our work.

Since 2011 we started with new methods of postgraduate training for our employees as well as for people interested in seminars about real estate law.

The Wiener Mietrechtstage, Viennese Tenant Right's Day, is now held once a year together with the Revisionsverband, the umbrella organisation of social landlords, and with another tenant organisation, Austrian Mieterbund.

We combine this new way of advanced training with a summer academy where concrete topics are intensively discussed together with professionals in tenant law and connected fields.

We improved our internet presence at Facebook, twitter and Google+, so that we can now communicate efficiently with members, and with non-members, in the new social media.

MVÖ founded a trust for people who cannot afford the membership and court fees, at the same time as we increased the membership fees for being able to finance all our new offers.

Each year MVÖ collects data about the service costs and publish average figures. These figures are used by tenants to give them an idea of how much service



cost should be and when it makes sense to check them

Future challenges for tenants in Austria, and for MVÖ?

The housing market is under pressure in Austria, because of an increasing population and increasing housing costs. At the same time the tenant law needs to be reformed, and an active process started to lobby about a new tenant law. All groups on the housing market try to influence the process. The MVÖ needs to look for partners in this process to keep-up the standards of the tenant law and to improve it, whereas the landlords try to weaken the tenant's rights and to increase the rents.

About rental housing in the future?

At the moment around 40% of all Austrians live in rented accommodation. In big cities the percentage is as high as 70%. The political wish of the conservative party is to increase the rate of homeownership and to privatise the social housing stock. The question for the future is: Which role does society give to the rental housing sector? At the moment it looks like history is going to be repeated and rental housing to become a second class tenure.



PHOTO: MVÖ

Mietervereinigung Österreichs celebrating 100 years, in 2011.

Canada

Fédération des locataires d'habitations à loyer modique du Québec (FLHLMQ)

Federation of low-cost housing tenants of Quebec, Montréal.

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About FLHLMQ, and most important activities during 2011–2013.

The Federation of low-cost housing tenants of Quebec exists since 1993, and counts approximately 300 tenant associations as members. We represent 65,000 low-cost housing households and are charged with doing political representation towards the government.

We support and encourage local tenant associations by giving them support on democratic issues, counselling, problems solving, rights protection, news, etc. All of our interventions with tenants are based on empowerment principles.

We encourage tenants to get involved in their local associations and to be consulted by their low-cost housing owners on different subjects, but mostly on renovations budgets.

We give support in the creation of tenant associations, and consultative tenant committees. We campaign to support the election of tenants on the board of direc-

tors of municipal housings offices.

We defend the rights of tenants throughout the province, with political representations for an increase in the respect of their rights.

Positive outcomes of FLHLMQ's work

Over the last two years, the FLHLMQ has supported a lot of tenant associations in the province, and we have encouraged tenants to get involved in the management of their low-cost housings. Also, we have convinced the provincial and federal governments to invest massively in repairing low-cost housings, with 1.2 billion \$ over 5 years.

Future challenges for tenants, and for the Federation

A lot of challenges are in sight for the future. In Quebec, the political climate is quite unstable. We have to do our best to maintain what we have gained over the last two decades. Since the rent is based on the household incomes (25%), successive provincial governments tried to raise that percentage up to 30%. With our actions, they could not achieve that goal but it still constitutes a threat for low-cost housing tenants. It is worth mentioning that, in Canada, the percentage is set at 30% in every province other than Quebec.

Moreover, new challenges are on the

way. First and foremost, the Government of Canada will stop financing the debt of low-cost housings when the agreements come to an end, which will be at the start in 2020. The challenge will be to find money to compensate the fact that the federal government will not be contributing anymore to the operational deficits of the low-cost housing. That will be a major problem because, at the moment, the operating costs are separated according to a standard procedure: On average:

- Tenants: 25% of their household incomes;
- Government of Canada: 50% of what is left after the tenant's share;
- Government of Quebec: 40% of what is left after the tenant's share;
- Municipal administrations: 10% of what is left after the tenant's share.

If the Canadian Government withdraws its share piece by piece, like they are planning to when the mortgages are paid, it is half of the budget that goes away. Even if the mortgages are paid, the operational costs cannot be absorbed by the cities and Provincial Government, giving them a good excuse to raise the tenants' share.

Since the Federal government pays its share for the renovation of the low-cost housing, we have convinced the two governments in the last years to renovate the actual low-cost housings in the province. But, while the Canadian Government paid its share in cash, the offices responsible for the provincial share didn't have the money and borrowed it with interest for 10 years that will have to be reimbursed. So, if the Canadian Government withdraws when the mortgages are paid like they're planning to, it is going to be more of a prob-



PHOTO BY PERMISSION WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Victoria Square in Montréal.

lem, this time because of the Provincial Government.

About rental housing in future Quebec

The future of low-cost housing in Quebec is not all dark, but it is not bright either. Although the political leaders will never get rid of low-cost housings because of the political costs, the biggest political formations are not committed to massively invest in social housings. It is not impossible that rents could be raised, that programs could be shut down and it is unclear if one day, the availability of social housing will eventually ever be able to match demand. We will be there to keep an eye on this situation. It is also a necessity to keep on working with local tenant associations to help them remain aware of their rights and responsibilities and to encourage them to get involved in the management of their low-cost housings.

Czech Republic

Sdružení nájemníků České republiky, SON ČR

Union of the Tenants of the Czech Republic
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About SON ČR

Union of the Tenants of the Czech Republic (SON ČR) was founded in 1991, but existed already in 1926 as the Union of Czechoslovak Tenants. President is Ing. Milan Taraba.

SON is a non-political citizen's association operating in the whole of Czech Republic providing legal advice to its members, 85% of the activities. SON also negotiates with local authorities and publishes four pages every month in the newspaper of Trade Unions, *Sondy*.

SON has some 20,000 individual members, together with 520,000 collective members with 22 trade unions and in cooperative houses.

Individual membership fee with SON is €16 per year, while the collective membership fee for a co-op house is €36, per year. Collective fees for trade unions, depending on the number of members, range from €250 to €1000 per year.

The legal advice carried out by SON is financed by the government, and is

annually accounted for to the Ministry of Regional Development. The contribution from the government corresponds to 62 % of total budget of SON.

At present time SON has 14 regional and 18 municipal local organisations which cover the whole country.

In some local areas SON works with housing cooperatives and other NGO organisations like the Council for seniors and the National Council for disable people.

All of SON's local organisations have regular and very useful cooperation with Trade unions – 21 of them are the collective members of SON. We also have the agreement of cooperation with Czech Society for Housing Development and with the Union of Housing cooperatives and Dwelling Owners.

Most important activities of SON, and in the Czech Republic

The most important activity of SON is legal advisory. The number of legal advice increases every year together with the problems of increasing rents and costs for services. SON is preparing all the background for our members for pleading and taking action in the courts. SON is also one of the submitters of legal acts in housing and is also present in the sessions of Housing Subcommittee of the Parliament.



Old Town, Staré Město, in Prague.

The most important issue for Czech tenants was the deregulation of rents, which were regulated in bigger cities and urban areas until December 31, 2010. From January 2011 the rents were established after individual negotiations and agreements between the landlords and the tenants. If the landlord and tenant

does not come to an agreement then the court will decide, case by case. SON participated in many discussions, TV and radio presentations and accomplished its goal; to settle an agreement with the representatives of the biggest landlords in the country without the necessity of legal proceedings. It means that thousands of tenants in Czech Republic were saved up of the legal actions.

Future challenges for tenants in the Czech Republic, and for SON

Presently the Czech Republic still has no social housing, which is a great problem. The only dwellings that could be categorized as social are retirement houses and day care centres. A major challenge is to introduce social housing in the Czech Republic similar to what exists in western Europe.

Our main goal for the year 2012 and 2013 was to participate in the drafting – which we succeeded – of the legislation on social housing, which is currently being debated in the Czech Parliament.

Another very important target for SON is to adopt special provisions for determining the amount of annual rent increases since the new Civic Code will be valid, from January 1, 2014. Recently SON presented to the Ministry a translated methodology from Germany, on how to establish and set annual rents, according to the 'mietspiegel' – rent mirror. Austria uses a similar model, where local rents should reflect local housing markets.

Denmark

Lejernes Landsorganisation i Danmark, LLO

Tenants Organisation of Denmark
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About LLO

The first national tenant association in Denmark was established in 1917. In 1966 two competing national organisations merged and formed the Tenants Organisation of Denmark.

Today around 40% of the Danish households rent their homes, of which about half rent from non-profit housing associations.

LLO consists of some 30 local tenant associations with all together 50,000 households as members. One third of these members are individual members and two thirds are collective members, like all tenants in a particular estate which has signed a collective agreement with LLO. The number of members is currently increasing, which improves the situation for LLO.

LLO publishes, four times a year, the magazine "Vi Lejere", distributed to some 80,000 addressees.

Positive experiences and outcomes of LLO's work

The local associations of LLO previously used to individually provide information and advice to their members, and



Copenhagen.

only by voluntary staff. This is changing and today more members are serviced by professionals, and with improved and extended services, provided by common service centres.

This development is paying off, in better services and increasing number of memberships.

There are smaller independent tenant

associations in Denmark, outside of LLO. Efforts to have them to join LLO have failed, partly due to disagreements on local autonomy versus regional co-operation on strengthening the services for tenants. LLO will continue to keep the door open for these independent associations.

LLO is confident in knowing that the strengthening of the services for tenants is

essential for also strengthening the tenant movement, and tenant's rights, in Denmark.

Future challenges for tenants in Denmark

Even though there is a centre-left government in Denmark it is not all that easy to have the tenant-perspective included in legislation. A major challenge is how to tackle rent increases in between two leases. Today, landlords in the private rental sector often do major renovations of their flats between the leases, which enables them to bypass rent regulation.

Another challenge will be the introduction of new policies on green issues, and how this will affect tenants.

Another issue for the future will be how to tackle increased governmental intervention in the development of the non-profit housing sector, and how the framework will be set. LLO fears that increased government intervention will reduce tenant's right to decide, in a sector which has historically fostered strong tenant democracy.

About rental housing in future Denmark

Rental housing will continue to play a major role in the Danish society, and no Danish politicians today say that they want to dramatically reduce the rental sector. Earlier political declarations about privatisation of flats in the non-profit housing sector are rarely heard of today. But that does not mean that there are politicians who would like to change the game to the disadvantage for the tenants.

It is therefore the task for LLO to increase its power, services and number of members, in order to be able to protect the interest of a much greater part of the Danish tenants than those who are presently organized in LLO.

England

National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations, NFTMO

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About NFTMO

The National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations was founded in 1992 and now has 125 tenant management organisations (TMOs) in membership. We have an executive committee that includes 20 community representatives from all parts of the country. The Federation employs one part time paid co-ordinator but otherwise all of the Federation's work depends on voluntary effort.

NFTMO is a national voluntary membership organisation. Our main purpose is to facilitate networking and support for TMOs in England and to promote community control as an option within regeneration initiatives and in areas of greatest need. A TMO is a means by which council or housing association tenants and leaseholders can collectively take on responsibility for managing the homes they live in NFTMO...

- promotes and facilitate the exchange of experience and ideas between tenant management organisations and like-minded community initiatives.
- Identifies and share examples of good

practice and excellence – sometimes through publications.

- publishes and distribute an E-Magazine.
- organises regional networking and national conferences
- administers a TMO Good Governance Kite Mark
- supports a national Guide TMO Network

Much of our work between 2011 and 2013 has aimed to make tenant control options available to more social housing tenants in England. Many tenants are still not aware of the potential and most landlords are reluctant to disseminate information about community control. With that aim we have worked with central government to develop faster routes to community control including a streamlined Right to Manage and a new 'Community Cashback' programme. At the same time we have worked hard to ensure the survival of existing TMOs, with a particular focus on encouraging good governance.

Positive experiences and outcomes of NFTMO's work.

We have been very pleased with our annual and regional conferences which have seen increased bookings and great feedback. These events are important

morale boosters for volunteers and staff. We have continued to have a dialogue with central government – in partnership with TPAS, TAROE and CCH – but we have been unable to influence a number of key policy decisions around welfare tenancy rights.

Future challenges for tenants and for NFTMO

Many tenants face falling incomes and increased rents. Those waiting to be allocated a home are likely to wait longer. 'Affordable' housing will be in short supply and will not be affordable to many. There will be pressure on tenants with higher incomes to move out of social housing altogether.

The NFTMO is likely to have a reduced grant income so we will need to look to alternative income streams but we are optimistic that our organisation has a viable long term role provided that the overall number of TMOs does not decline.

Rental housing in future England

Rented housing will continue to have an important role in England. Owner occupation is beyond the means of many people and will continue to be so. The trend seems to be to blur the boundaries between the public and private rented sectors with less regulation, less security of tenure and less government intervention. Sadly, public sector/social housing may in the future become housing of last resort – similar to the US model. The NFTMO is campaigning for a public rented sector that is popular, diverse and a tenancy of choice.

Many tenants face falling incomes and increased rents. Those waiting to be

allocated a home are likely to wait longer. 'Affordable' housing will be in short supply and will not be affordable to many. There will be pressure on tenants with higher incomes to move out of social housing altogether.



Camden Town, London.



England

Tenant Participation Advisory Service, TPAS

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About TPAS England

TPAS is the oldest and largest national membership organisation for tenants in England, currently having 1,800 tenant groups as members. It was founded 25 years ago and took inspiration from TPAS Scotland following the uniquely British pattern of including membership for Landlord

organisations who were dedicated to supporting and encouraging tenant groups in the management of their housing stock.

Following the ending of any direct Government grants TPAS has continued to provide training and support to tenants on a fee-earning basis in order to supplement the income from membership fees.

The period of 2011–2013 has proved a major challenge to our organisation. The spirits of tenants in England had been raised in early 2010 by the establishing of a new government sponsored body, the National Tenants Voice, established to improve opportunities for tenants to

advise and influence Government. A new government saw funding withdrawn leaving TPAS with a major challenge as to how to fill this gap.

Following further government rethinking the Tenants Services Authority; the body established to enforce compliance with the regulations controlling Social housing, which included many references to tenant involvement; was disbanded in 2011. Its role was taken over by the Homes and Communities Agency, previously the body controlling just funding for housing development. Despite the warnings from TPAS and others of the problems that this would cause the inevitable happened. The HCA now will only investigate failure to follow regulatory guidance where this is likely to cause significant danger to tenants. Very few of the cases referred to it are investigated, other than in respect of financial matters, and general regulation enforcement is virtually non-existent.

Positive experiences, and outcomes, of TPAS's work

In addition to developing its new structure TPAS has continued to try to consolidate its role in training and supporting tenants. A major achievement has been that the only two Government contracts for work supporting tenants were awarded to TPAS in January 2013. These are the Tenant Empowerment and Tenant Panels National training grants for 2012–2014. TPAS has developed a new platform for delivering these, Tenant Central, with its own website and image.

Future challenges for tenants in England, and for TPAS

Also with the national financial situation

adversely affecting the income of social landlords their ability, even if they still wish to support their tenant groups, has become more limited. Individual tenant groups and National bodies such as TPAS have faced increasing challenges to survive.

At such a challenging time TPAS took the radical step of completely reviewing its structure to see if a new model, incorporating a new and stronger voice for tenants could be established to fill the void left by National Tenants Voice. A new structure was approved by members at the Annual General Meeting in August 2012.

Rather than everything being managed by a board of directors elected by the membership new bodies were agreed to assist develop policy. A smaller board is retained to manage the business of TPAS but increasingly the views of members are being drawn together to be discussed, and policy developed, at National forum level.

Although TPAS has always ensured that the views of tenants were kept separate from those of landlord members the new National Tenant Forum will provide a clear and distinct platform for the views of tenants to be expressed. A parallel forum, the National Providers Forum will allow committed landlords a voice and the two bodies will, where appropriate, meet in the National Co-regulation Forum to agree matters of mutual concern.

TPAS continues to survive and will continue despite all challenges supports and assists its tenant group members throughout England. It will ensure that tenants are not denied a national voice.

Finland

Vuokralaiset ry, VKL

Finnish Tenants

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About Finnish Tenants

Vuokralaiset, Finnish Tenants, is an open interest group/NGO that serves the best interest of tenants. This nationwide organization serves tenants who has problems with their tenancies or/and need legal counseling.

Advice is given by telephone, and is free for members. The individual membership fee is €30 per year, or 50 € for two years.

Finnish Tenants also have members from the local independent tenants' organizations and the trade unions. Besides advising, the organization cooperates actively and open-mindedly with all actors dealing with rental housing.

Positive experiences, and outcomes, of VKL's work

The organization emphasizes equal living. Therefore, our association finds it important to show that living as a tenant is as important as being a homeowner, and should enjoy similar rights as owners, including secure tenure. The most important activity in the recent years has also been the attempt to improve the image of tenancy. In return of paying the rental

fee, it is the tenant's basic right to live in a healthy and safe rental property – a place that feels like home.

The most positive outcome is that the financial structure of rental housing is slowly changing to serve also tenant's interest instead of the companies behind rental houses. Finnish Tenants has demanded more strict and identical rules and instructions to determine what costs are included in the rental fee and it is our opinion that the whole process should be controlled better. The rental fee should not contain unnecessary costs, or otherwise, the tenant has to rely on housing allowances. The government has also taken notice to this grievance and the matter has gained a lot of publicity.

Future challenges for Finnish tenants and for VKL

The biggest challenge is the growing need of housing, particularly of affordable rental housing, in the metropolitan area of Finland. Demand is greater than supply, so the shortage causes too high rents and extortionate terms in rental contracts.

About rental housing in future Finland

Rental housing is becoming more and more popular in Finland. Especially cohabitation as a form of living is growing popular because it's convenient, ecological and social.



Bi-lingual Helsinki.

France

Confédération Nationale du Logement, CNL

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www.lacnl.com

es of rents, electricity and gas prices. CNL also mobilized against eviction of tenants which has increased in numbers these last years.

At the same time, CNL had a showdown with the Fillon government – presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy – to get back its recognition as a consumers' association, and its subsidies.

2012 was a major election year for France. CNL made numerous proposals for a real consideration of housing within the framework of the elections. Measures and bills taken by the new government do not go very far, that is why CNL led numerous actions to face social urgency of families.

In April 2013, CNL had its 50th national congress and Eddie Jacquemart was elected president.

Positive experiences, and outcomes, of CNL's work

In 2012, for the general elections, CNL mobilized its entire organization. Members of CNL considered and worked with urgent proposals to fight the housing crisis. With the change of government, CNL has been invited by various ministers whose ministries are in any way dealing with housing: urban affairs, social affairs, economy, etc. This mobilization of tenant's and consumer's voices has been heard of,



but not always acknowledged by the decision makers, unfortunately.

Future challenges for CNL

2014 will be an important year for CNL. From November 15th to December 15th, the elections of people who advocate tenant rights in boards of social housing providers will take place. It will be a decisive time for CNL as the first organization in terms of elected representatives since 2010, when the last elections occurred. CNL's ambition is consolidate our position in votes and seats, and develop CNL's presence within the social housing providers. For that purpose, there will be big campaign throughout 2014.

In the next couple of years, CNL will mobilize and lobby for more construction of social housing units. Rents and costs for energy must decrease. Evictions of tenants and cuts of water, gas and electricity must stop. Finally, it will be necessary to act for a real balance between tenants and owners – for more tenure neutrality.

About rental housing in future France

It is essential that the social rental housing sector grows, with more construction needed. New massive construction of social rental housing will itself regulate the rental market; more supply will allow to manage the demand and to lower rents. Housing must be accessible to all!



About CNL

CNL is a union of tenants and consumers of rental housing. CNL is the first national housing union in France, already established in 1916 as Union Confédérale des Locataires.

CNL's main mission is to defend tenants. CNL is militantly in favor of right to housing for all. CNL is also recognized by the French State as a consumers association.

CNL has 70,000 members, households, and with 4,600 local branches all over France. In France, 788 tenant representatives are elected for boards of the social housing providers, HLM. During the last elections, in 2010, 43% of social rental tenants voted for CNL representatives.

Since 2011, there is a continued housing crisis in France. More and more families find themselves in trouble. This housing crisis can be broken down into several components: Inadequate supply of social housing, poor housing, and insalubrious housing. In this context, CNL led actions to fight against increas-

Germany

Deutscher Mieterbund e.V, DMB

German Tenants' Association
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www.mieterbund.de

About the DMB

The DMB was founded in 1900. Current president is Dr. Franz-Georg Rips, and Chief Executive Lukas Siebenkotten. IUT/DMB contact persons is Heidrun Clausen, board member of DMB: heidrun.clausen@t-online.de.

DMB is exclusively financed by membership fees, and is politically independent and the political representation of all tenants in Germany. Under the DMB's umbrella there are 15 associations at state levels and 322 regional tenant offices with more than 550 counselling centres organized. The DMB has 1,300 full-time employees and 2,500 volunteers.

Currently 1.24 million tenant households are member of the regional associations, which represent some 3 million tenants. The main fields of activities are lobbying, legal advice, consumer counselling and publishing.

The magazine *MieterZeitung*, 6 issues per year, is distributed to some 640,000 German households.

The focus of DMB's political work was until recently to deal with the amend-



ing of law for tenancy, which came into force in May 2013. Unfortunately, only few DMB proposals were adopted. Many amendments in this law are considered as detriments for the tenants, and as a tenant organization we cannot sympathize with this law.

Positive outcomes in recent years

The issues on housing and urban development have gained increased importance in the last two years. The meaning of "habi-

tation" has become more important again. Our work in the last years has paid off.

The DMB has founded networks with stakeholders and organizations on all issues of house building, social housing, transformation of the energy system – known in German as *'Energiewende'* and energy poverty *'Energiearmut'*. We have been able to make the public aware and published expert opinions in this field. The DMB has also been involved in many discussions, for example in the Ethics Committee of the Federal Government.

Furthermore, in cooperation with Campact eV, 100,000 people signed the petition 'Housing must be affordable'.

Main challenges in the years to come

The DMB is heavily engaged in the next general election for Parliament, in September 2013. The DMB's proposals for the demand of "affordable housing and urban social development" were included in many debates and the campaigns of the political parties.

Public and municipal housing is still being sold to private financial investors, which the DMB opposes. Only in a few cases we had the chance to prevent this sale.

Future challenges for tenants and for DMB

The housing and real estate market in Germany is not homogenous. There is an increased demand for housing in cities and for investment in real estate. But the construction has stagnated in recent years, which has resulted in housing shortages and huge price jumps in the rents and in the property market. This shortage particularly hits low-income households, students, young families and low income

retirees. This scarcity is in sharp contrast with the situation in rural areas, where there is a lot of vacant housing and the demand for housing is low.

The major challenges in the next year will be to maintain and create new affordable flats.

The stock of social housing decreases every year. This has to be stopped. Germany urgently needs social housing, and social housing should not be sold to foreign investors.

Furthermore, Germany needs a social and fair tenancy law. The setbacks of rights in the tenancy amendment law from the first of May 2013 must be considered and tenants' rights have to be strengthened. The previous regulations apply only to rent increases in existing leases. In between to tenancy agreements landlords can raise the rent in almost any amount. This must be limited.

Energy refurbishment is necessary but the investment costs, for which has been promoted in recent years, cause ever increasing rents. These costs must be distributed socially acceptable and fair to all. The energy costs itself, heating and electricity, have also increased dramatically, and low income households have to be exempted or compensated from these increases. Finally, the housing subsidy *'Wohngeld'* must be increased and the growing energy costs have to be incorporated.

About rental housing in future Germany

In Germany, home of 80.2 million inhabitants, there are about 40.3 million homes. The majority of them, about 54.2 percent of households live in rented accommodation. The rental market will therefore play a crucial role also in the future.





Italy

Sindacato Inquilini Casa e Territorio, SICET

Union of tenants of houses and territory
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 www.sicet.it

About SICET, and activities

SICET is one of the three main Italian organizations of tenants, and has been affiliated to CISL, Italian Confederation of Trade Unions, since 1997 in order to

represent in the best way the needs of tenants. Guido Piran is Secretary General of SICET.

The years 2011 to 2013 have been very difficult years for Italy because of the serious economic crisis. SICET has been engaged at the state level, regional and city level to prevent various public spending cuts that hit tenants. SICET has requested funding for new social/public housing that would assist affected households to find affordable rental housing.

At the end of 2012 SICET organized a

national demonstration in Rome in front of the Ministry of Public Works to support policies for affordable rent.

In 2011 we carried out the organizational meeting of the National SICET with the aim to improve and make more efficient the relationships between the various levels of SICET and its members.

In September 2012 SICET, together with IUT, participated in the UN World Urban Forum in Naples.

In May 2013 we held our national conference where we discussed the policies of SICET for the next four years. SICET will aim at having more social/public housing, giving aid to poor tenant households and for those having been evicted. SICET also wants a reform of the private rental market, with less tax on rent.

Experiences and outcomes of SICET's work

These past years have been very difficult for many Italian households, who can no longer afford the rents. It is being estimated that 250,000 evictions will be carried out in Italy in the next two years.

SICET assists more than 150,000 tenants all over Italy, mainly in issues concerning their rents. While in spite of the need for public funding for tenants, SICET was unable to prevent budget cuts of the state and in the regions. We have been successful and done a good job with the regions and municipalities on planning, always pointing out the needs for new construction and in the recovery of urban social/public housing.

Future challenges for Italian tenants, and for SICET

Italy needs a reformed private rental sector. SICET claims that rents, which are too



high for the average income Italian tenant, need to be lowered in the private sector. Also, Italy needs a welfare state housing policy with public rental housing. To achieve this Italy needs a law that provides for the negotiation of the rents, by tenants' associations and trade union owners. Also, we need a reduction of taxes paid on rents, by the owners, which are today very high, more than 50% of the amount paid as rent.

About rental housing in future Italy

With the current financial crisis fewer families will not be able to buy a flat or a house in Italy. Sales went down by 50% from 2008 to 2012. The solution must be to increase the construction and output of rental housing. Access to affordable rental housing also helps young people to find work by making costs for living less expensive, and enhances the possibility to take on a job in another city.

Japan

日本借地借家人連合

Japanese Tenants Association, JTA
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About JTA

The Japanese Tenants Association was founded in 1979. The board of JTA is composed of one full-time official and seven volunteer directors. We manage JTA only by membership fees and from donations without any financial support by the state and municipalities.

Our main fields of activity is about giving legal advice, negotiating rents, assist-

ing in renewal fees, and preventing evictions and so on, by using e-mails, letters, telephone and interviews.

Positive experiences, and outcomes

In 2011 JTA gave a presentation about “The present housing policies on homeless people in Japan” at a workshop of the Academy of Housing for Life and Well-Being.

Furthermore, one of the hidden expenses for tenants in Japan is the contract renewal fee. Many rental leases include a clause charging a fee equivalent to one or two months’ rent in order for the lessee to renew the contract at the

end of the term. In 2012 we organised a workshop where an attorney gave a presentation about the judgement related to ‘Renewal Fees’ that the Supreme Court judged in July of 2012. This presentation was given with the background of an unjust judgement which stated that the special contract to pay renewal fees was valid. Over 150 people participated.

In 2011 we presented “the report of the activities of the 18th IUT Congress (2007–2009)” and the “report about the present situation of homeless people in Japan” in the above-mentioned Academy’s bulletin.

We tried to make people aware of our activities through the above mentioned events, but we could not obtain enough success because of the shortage of financial and human resources.

Future challenges for Japanese tenants, and for JTA

a. Studying the change of social housing policy.

In the 1980s an easy money policy caused much land speculations and soaring land prices. In 1991 the bubble bankruptcy seriously affected social housing landlords with huge debts. The state has privatized the Urban Renaissance Agency (URA), the largest social housing landlord in Japan having owned around 770,000 rental housing units. Other social housing landlords have been affected likewise. All in all, the number of social housing units decreased by 110,000 from 2003 to 2008.

JTA must study and react on this development at the same time as there is an ever increasing need for affordable and social housing in Japan.

In 2006 the state enacted “The Fundamental Act for Housing Policy” to introduce enterprises into the social housing sector. According to this Act, the state and

local governments should make full use of enterprises’ vitality. It aims at keeping up with the rapid socio-economic changes such as declining birth rate, an ageing population, change of people’s lifestyle and new household formations.

Japan’s ageing nation is a major challenge. In 2011 the rate of aging was 23%, or almost 30 million people who were 65+. As to the average annual income of around 38% of the aged households, it was at the same level as of the households receiving welfare benefits. In 2008 about 4.7 million people, most of who were aged dementia patients, were recognized as those who needed nursing services by the state. But only one million people of them have lived in the small sum-nursing facilities.

Consequently over three million aged people have to live alone, or live supported by members of their families. To cope with this serious situation, the state started a new plan to supply 600,000 social housing units with nursing facilities for the low-income aged at the end of 2011.

b. Making JTA’s draft of constitutional provisions on “Housing Rights”

According to Article 6 of “the Fundamental Act for Housing Policy”, “a dwelling is the indispensable foundation for people who enjoy healthy and cultural living.” But, in 2006 the state refused to adopt the provisions of “Housing Right” in this Act as an excuse for not reaching the national consensus on the state’s responsibility for “Housing Right”.

Therefore JTA must make a draft on the constitutional provisions of “Housing Right”, taking into account of tenants’ rights. At the same time we must rouse the public to improve the bad housing situation and strengthen housing rights.



Tokyo.

PHOTO: ANDRÉ JOHANSSON

Latvia

Latvijas Irmieku Apvienība, LĪA

Latvia Tenant Association, LTA
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About LTA

LTA has 125 members, of which 8 are very active. LTA communicates and lobby political parties, deputies of Latvian Parliament, state Ministries and Riga Town Council on the problems of “sitting tenants”.

LTA gives regular juridical consultations to ‘sitting tenants’, and we represent them in Latvian courts.

Positive experiences, and outcomes, of LTA’s work

Short answer; no positive experiences concerning the situation for ‘sitting tenants’ in Latvia. But one positive outcome of our efforts is that a collective application of 10 Latvian families was recognized as admissible in 30 September 2011 by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Past and future challenges for LTA, and ‘sitting tenants’ in Latvia

Restitution of multifamily houses in post-communist Europe, carried out at demand of the EU, led to tragedy for 7.5 million people. Restituted houses had been given to very distant and in many cases to false



heirs of the former house owners together with the ‘sitting tenants’. Before restitution, tenants had contracts with the state. But

during restitution, tenants were not relocated to other state owned houses or paid any adequate compensation.

Old Town, Riga.

Restitution of multifamily houses in Latvia has been carried out in the most severe and inhuman way. Victims of the restitution became 250,000 persons or 10% of the population of Latvia. During 20 years the right wing political parties that came to power in Latvia did nothing to solve the situation and accepted changes in the laws that worsened the situation.

In 2001 the law on ‘Apartment rent’ was introduced, with so-called rent ceilings by which each year the amount of rent for ‘sitting tenants’ was made higher and higher. In 2006 the Constitutional Court of Latvia abolished any limitations of rent in denationalized houses so that the owners of these houses can now ask any rent from ‘sitting tenants’.

In 2009 Riga got a left wing Mayor, which brought new hopes to ‘sitting tenants’. But, the rules of registering ‘sitting tenants’ in the queue for municipal flats became even harder. This queue has now 7,000 registered households, of which most are ‘sitting tenants’.

The tragedy of ‘sitting tenants’ must be neither forgotten nor forgiven. We, members of tenants associations in all east-European countries, must join LTA’s efforts in the struggle for restoration of social justice for ‘sitting tenants’ in Latvia. We must use all means in our disposition for this struggle; applications to European Court of Human Rights, election of our deputies to local national parliaments and to Council of Europe.

The Netherlands

Nederlandse Woonbond

Dutch Union of Tenants
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About the Woonbond

The Nederlandse Woonbond represents over 1,5 million renting households, corresponding to 51,5% of all renting households in the Netherlands, up from 35% in 2001. The Woonbond organises tenants mainly through its 548 member organisations and the residents' committees associated by them. Additionally, Woonbond has over 6,000 individual members.

Since 2010 the Netherlands have had a right wing government under liberal Prime Minister Rutte. This government has come with serious attacks on tenants, tenants' rights and the structure of the Dutch social housing system. The attacks have increased since the last elections of 2012, in spite of the fact that the Social Democrats have joint the Liberals in government.

In 2011 the government announced a plan to cut the budget of housing allowances, and a plan to raise the maximum rent of every rental house with €123. Also, we witnessed an agreement with the EU which forbade housing associations to rent affordable houses to households with



an income exceeding the modal annual household income of max. €34,000.

In 2012 the government announced a law to introduce the 'right to buy', as much as 75% of the total social rental stock. Also, the government advertised a law on income-related rent increases and a huge landlord tax, based on the value of the homes owned by landlord in the social sector.

The political work of the Woonbond from 2011 to 2013 has consisted mainly of defending tenants' rights, availability and affordability, done with a twofold strategy consisting of campaigning and presenting alternatives. The Woonbond organised a campaign against all of the plans and laws mentioned above, but was unfortunately unable to stop most of them.

One of the campaigns was 'Ik wil ook wonen' (I want housing too) where the Woonbond has been collecting the stories of people who could not rent a dwelling because of the EU-agreement men-

tioned above. Over 4.000 alarming stories were presented to the Minister of housing, who promised to discuss the agreement in Brussels.

In 2012 the Woonbond launched a campaign called against the 'gluurverhoging', which is a pun that contracts the words for rent rise and peeping. It was a media campaign against the income-related rent rise, which allowed landlords to peep into the tenant's tax forms. The expression 'gluurverhoging' became widely known and was nominated for the 'Word of the year' in 2012.

The Woonbond succeeded in blocking the income-related rent rise in 2012 by legal action. In 2013, the law was introduced after all, but the Woonbond managed to introduce several adjustments, such as a decrease of the rent rise percentage and an exception in case of a declining income.

In 2013 the Woonbond launched the campaign 'Huuralarm' (Rent alarm) against the combination of attacks on tenants planned in the new governments' coalition agreement. A national petition collected 60,000 signatures. They were presented to the senate by tenants from the whole country

Positive experiences, and outcomes, of Woonbond's work 2011–2013.

The Woonbond has had some positive experiences, like 'Wonen 4.0' and the Covenant energy saving rental sector. 'Wonen 4.0' is a historical agreement between four Dutch housing stakeholders: The home owners, the housing agents, the housing associations and the Woonbond. These four agreed on a radical reform of the housing system, as opposed to government policies. It featured equal treatment of home

owners and tenants, a reform of tax benefits for home owners and a revision of the legislation on maximum rent increases. Unfortunately, the governing parties chose to ignore this broadly based agreement when writing their coalition agreement.

Positive outcomes: The right-to-buy law was cancelled, the rise of maximum rents was confined to ten regions with high pressure on the housing market and the income-related rent rise was postponed for one year and adjusted.

Future challenges for Dutch tenants and for the Woonbond.

The main challenge that lies ahead is to find a way to prevent the demolition of the housing system. We have forged an alliance with the housing associations to improve the planned legislation in favour of tenants. An important joint goal is to prevent the imminent investment strike on the rental market, due to the landlord tax. Affordability and availability of social housing will be our key priorities for the years to come.

About rental housing in future Netherlands

The role of rental housing in the future is hard to foretell, since there are two contradicting tendencies at the moment. On the one hand, the popularity of home ownership has decreased for the first time in over thirty years. House prices have fallen dramatically, by 21%; from €240,000 in 2008 to €206,000 in the summer of 2013. This development could lead to an increased popularity of renting.

On the other hand, there is the all-out attack of the governing liberal party on social housing and affordable rents. This could minimize the broadly based rental sector as we know it into a mere welfare facility.



Amsterdam was ranked No 1 as the world's most bicycle-friendly city in 2013.

Norway

Leieboerforeningen, Lbf

Tenants' Association of Norway
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www.lbf.no

About Lbf

The Norwegian Tenants' Association is an independent, non-party political organization founded in 1933. The association is national and has some 4,000 individual members. The association also represents commercial tenants like renters of small shops and offices.

The Tenants' Association has nine employees, half of them part-time. The association receives an annual operating grant from the city of Oslo of €71,000. From 2011, Lbf also receives state operating funding of €127,000 per year. Other revenues include project funding, fees from legal consultations and membership fees. The membership fee is €45 per year for individuals while students pay €26 and commercial tenants €130.

Lbf gives legal assistance to members, ranging from basic advice to legal representation in courts. The association has two lawyers and five part-time law students who annually assist in more than 2,000 cases.



Enjoying spring sun in Oslo.

Lbf does social work to increase the participation and integration of disadvantaged households. This is done through projects funded by public authorities. Recent years there has been a particular focus on reducing and preventing evictions and education in housing legal rights to social workers.

Lbf also does political lobbying to improve and enhance tenant's position and situation in the housing market.

The housing situation in Norway

Norwegian housing policy has favored homeownership since the end of World War II. Different kinds of subsidies,

especially extensive tax-subsidies have made it possible even for a household with middle and low income to buy a home. Today 23% of the Norwegians rent their dwellings, 64% are homeowners and 13% live in coops.

The majority of tenants are young people who rent for a shorter period, for instance when studying or in the beginning of working careers. However, a strong increase in house prices in the last 10-15 years has resulted in many who are unable to buy their own house. This has led to a strong pressure on the rental market and significant rent increases. The Norwegian center-left coalition government in 2012 launched a white paper on housing policies with a significant broader focus on rental housing in the years to come.

The Tenants' Association has highly skilled expertise in legal matters. The association actively participates in the housing policy debate, and has recently received approval for several important changes in rent legislation.

Future challenges

Too few tenants in Norway are organized in the Tenants' Association. To strengthen the legal rights of tenants and to give tenants greater democratic and political influence, the Norwegian Housing Bank, Husbanken, in 2012 offered project funding so that the Tenants' Association could increase the numbers of members. This year we have established a new local office in Trondheim, the third biggest town in Norway and we have also established a network of lawyers in other parts of the country.

In the years to come we will focus on attracting more municipal tenants to become members of our tenant association.

Poland

Polskie Zrzeszenie Lokatorów, PZL

Polish Tenant Association
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About PZL

The Polish Association of Tenants, PZL, is an NGO established in Krakow in 1989. PZL was established to protect the rights of tenants in Poland, especially the rights of so called 'sitting tenants', tenants living in today's private rentals, in houses privatized during the 1990's up till today.

As an association we took active part in debating the formation of the housing law after the political transformation in Poland in early 1990's. PZL represented the tenant's interests when establishing the Housing Law Act.

From the beginning, the main aim of our association has been to protect housing rights and promotion of decent, affordable housing in Poland. PZL's position is that the management of municipal housing should be more efficient and that the state authorities should establish a true and democratic housing policy in Poland.

The working members of our association are all volunteers, and PZL does not receive any grants from the state or the municipality. Limited funding is obtained



Selling the world-famous Krakow pretzel.

from tenant's' donations received when PZL provides legal advice, twice a week from our office in Krakow.

In 2011 to 2013 PZL undertook activities with the aim of promoting tenant's rights in Poland and we have been advocating the Polish ratification of the Euro-

pean Social Charter.

PZL took part in the "social dialogue" of tenants in Krakow with the local authorities.

In 2013 we started a project with the aim of establishing a "rent mirror", to be used when establishing the rent levels in Krakow. PZL collects information about the rent stakes and we will prepare a report for City office.

Positive experiences, and outcomes, of PZL's work 2011–2013

We have succeeded in establishing a permanent social dialogue with the local authorities in the city of Krakow, and we hope that in the future we will have more influence on the housing policy. We also helped our members to avoid evictions and to avoid unreasonable rent increases.

Future challenges for tenants, and for PZL

The major challenge for PZL is to promote affordable rental housing in Poland, because today there is no permanent state housing policy promoting and supporting a market of affordable rentals. At the same time, people in Poland suffer from a huge housing shortage and from prices of housing which are too high compared to average Polish wages.

About rental housing in a future Poland

We hope that rental housing will play a more significant role in the future. But unfortunately, today it seems as the state authorities do not acknowledge the problems of rental housing and tenants.

Portugal

Associação dos Inquilinos Lisbonenses, AIL

Association of Lisbon tenants
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Government and the European Commission, the IMF the ECB, there was a generalized reduction and withdrawal of social rights; labour rights as well as rights to healthcare and education. Also salaries were reduced, and the Christmas grant to pensioners and public employees was cut in all or in part. There was also a general increase in prices of goods and services.

About AIL

The Associação dos Inquilinos Lisbonenses was founded in 1924 with the aim of representing and protecting the interests of Lisbon tenants. With the course of the years, AIL expanded its area of intervention to the adjacent municipalities of Lisbon.

AIL is a Cooperative Association which provides services to two types of cooperative members: individuals; housing tenants and residents of condominiums and collective; tenant companies, associations of various kinds, condominium management companies, etc.

AIL presently has about 20,000 active co-operators, and has the status of a public utility and social partner. AIL does not enjoy any subsidies from the government, but the contributions that we receive from our co-operators are exempted from taxation.

Recent political developments in Portugal

Resulting from the memorandum signed in April 2011 between the Portuguese

Housing was also targeted by several measures; the value of properties was written up and property taxation was increased in order to increase tax revenues; the urban rehabilitation legislation was changed allowing amenities to the real estate investment funds exempting them from taxes and duties. Legislative measures were taken in order to end residential and non-residential leases, concluded before 1990. Rents were allowed to be increased – often to unaffordable levels.

The proposal of these measures triggered an extensive discussion between AIL and the legislative powers, in order to try and curb the effects. But in spite of AIL's efforts the laws were approved by the governing coalition of PSD and CDS, and were signed by the President, and came into effect in November 2012.

Without sensitivity and without respect for citizens, particularly the elderly, and in their eagerness to end the renting contracts and collect more taxes, the



Tram in Lisbon.

political power has created more injustice, more poverty, more social exclusion, more indignity, and more abandonment.

The landlords triggered a vigorous process of increasing the rents which led to increased pressure on AIL from members, but also attracted new members.

It is estimated that close to 50,000 households have had major rent increases, and today tenants' rights are almost non-existent.

Future challenges for tenants in Portugal, and for AIL?

AIL aims at addressing the current legislation and discussing new legislation that would grant and guarantee tenant's rights. Rental housing of poor quality should not be allowed to be placed on the market, and owners should be compelled to do regular

renovation works on buildings, incl. the interior and elevators. Furthermore, allow the deduction of the income in order to eliminate the proliferation of leases without a contract and approve of a tax policy less burdensome on the property in order to reduce rents.

AIL further addresses the problems of thousands of houses in poor condition and also the many vacant houses. AIL encourages urban rehabilitation by creating extended and more suitable administrative and financial mechanisms. Also, conservation work of houses should be supported, particularly in condominiums, and grants to young tenants should be established.

Romania

Liga Asociațiilor de Proprietari, Habitat

The League of Homeowner's Associations, Habitat

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About Habitat Romania

Habitat League of Romania is a non-profit federation of home owner's and tenant's associations. Taking into account the social and economic difficult background of Romania, especially after the communist period, our organisations is providing counselling on paths of association and sustainable development of local communities.

Mihai Mereuta is the President of the Habitat League since 2003, and he is responsible for the League's relations with internal and international institutions.

Habitat Romania has a wide range of projects in cooperation with the administrative authorities, like various ministries, cities and town halls, police departments and with housing services' regulation agencies and providers.

Most of all we are trying to influence improved relations between the residents and the official authorities based upon the principle of equality.

Between 2011 and 2013 the Habitat League was very active counselling resi-

dents in housing management, and in strengthening local communities. We were also engaged in urban regeneration, in the development of human resources, in the administration of buildings and in thermal rehabilitation of multifamily houses.

Habitat has affiliated legal entities in 37 cities and towns in Romania, ensuring effective implementation of activities in most counties.

Business objectives and projects developed by the Habitat League are: Improving the education among people involved in housing management, and increasing the level of community involvement in the social domain.

Also we aim at strengthening the urban partnerships to promote consumer interests and capacity building, and promoting local urban regeneration projects, together with energy efficiency refurbishment. We promote the safety of residents and of the necessity to insure residential houses.

Over 2,200 people have graduated from the condominium management training courses organized by the Habitat League, in collaboration with other institutions and organizations.

Since July 2012, the Habitat League is a centre for evaluation of professional competences for condominium management.

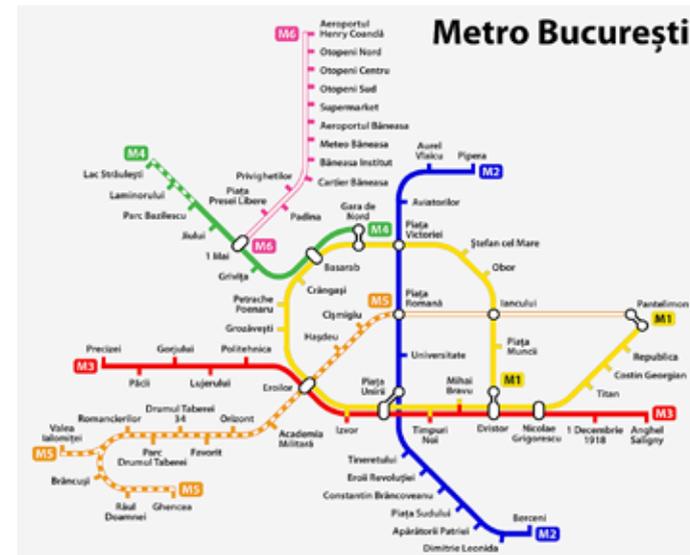
Up to date we have evaluated the professional skills of more than 100 persons.

The Habitat League maintains permanent relations with the Energetics Association of Romania, the Romanian Committee of the World Energy Committee, IUT, the UN Economic Commission for Europe, the World Bank and with European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, EBRD.

We implemented projects financed by the MATRA program, run by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We also ran projects co-funded by the Swiss Counterpart Fund, and a project financed by POS-DRU, Romania.

Positive experiences, and outcomes

Habitat League has acquired expertise in the management and implementation of projects providing all essential components in the implementation of projects;



organizational and operational management, financial management, information and publicity.

Employees who are involved have accumulated expertise by implementing the above mentioned projects.

Future challenges for tenants, and for Habitat League

One of the biggest challenges still remains, to enhance the consciousness of the homeowners and homeowners associations on the rights and the obligations, regarding the administration and management of the property. Also there is need for changes in people's mentalities, in essence, raising the level of awareness of rights and obligations of citizens.

There is also a lack of ability of local municipalities, when establishing essential partnerships with high-profile organizations, in terms of sustainable development of the local community.

Lack of experience in developing projects and lack of investments in the field of housing is a big problem, worsened by difficulties in accessing project financing.

About rental housing in future Romania

In the future, the number of persons who wish to rent housing will increase and thus Romania must work at housing policies regarding this sector and to the development of public-private partnerships.

Russia

Ассоциация нанимателей жилья, РАНЖ

Russian Tenant Association, RTA
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About Russian Tenant Association

The RTA was registered in 2008, founded by a group of highly educated housing professionals, members of the Russian network 'Housing education', who fight housing illiteracy.

The real starting point was a joint project with the Polish tenant association, PZL, when we studied and disseminated information and experiences from rental housing in Poland, and by visit of Mr. Magnus Hammar to Moscow the same year.

RTA has representatives in 45 Russian regions, all housing experts. RTA does not have any registered members, and RTA functions as a network.

RTA's goals:

- attract attention to aspects of rental housing policies and make housing policies more "neutral",
- support rental issues by all possible means,
- continue giving tenant legal advice and consultations,
- consult with authorities and politicians,

- evaluate existing national and local legislation in different Russian regions from a tenant perspective,
- contact journalists, realtors, politicians, students and pensioners and have them interested and involved in tenant's issues,

We have presented issues on tenants and rents for local authorities in the cities of Perm, Kirov, Krasnoyarsk, Baikalsk, Kungur, Samara and Riazan.

In 2012 we organised special events on tenant and rental issues; a round table in Moscow in February on student's rental problems; a round table at the Regional Ministry of Construction of the Kaluga region on "Development of rental housing, Pilot projects in Kaluga region".

We disseminated information about tenant issues via reports and presentations at various scientific and public events; Youth Forum in June 2013 "iVolga 2013", and at Housing Education Forums in Samara, Moscow, Ulan-Ude and Saint Petersburg

RTA and international activities

Internationally we collaborated with IUT and IUT members, including study-tours in 2012 to Poland, Krakow, and to Copenhagen, Denmark.

In April 2012 we organised a semi-



Postcard from Moscow, 1974.

nar in Moscow "Peculiarities of organising social renting: Experiences of Russia and IUT Russian-speaking partners", with representation from Polish Association of Tenants, on the basis of Public Chamber of Russian Federation and with the support of the Higher School of Economics.

In June 2013 Prof. Shomina presented the report "Rental housing in Russia, recent trends and modern programmes" at the annual conference of European Network of Housing Research, ENHR, in Taragona Spain.

Additionally Prof. Shomina published the article "Transformation in Russian housing: the new key roles of local authorities" in the International Journal of Housing Policy, available via: www.iut.nu/members/find_out_more.htm

Positive experiences and outcomes

Our first victories: tenant issues is now the subject of public discussions at all levels and in all regions of Russia. Furthermore, we have managed to introduce social

housing on the agenda of Russian Parliamentarians and leaders of political parties. Also, Russian Association of Realtors has begun to discuss problems of unregulated market rental housing.

But privatisation of municipal housing stock was postponed up till 2015 and many new rental projects were frozen.

Future challenges for tenants, and for RTA

- for municipal tenants; the pressure from neighbours who might be owners of their flats – the relations are sometimes quite strained, and there is pressure from authorities to privatize their flats and become owners,
- for private tenants; the increase of rents and unexpected evictions. This sector is mainly "grey", without tenancy agreements and other documents,
- for all residents; terrible increase of all utility costs, and fight against evictions because of non-payments,
- for RTA; to find money to continue education of tenants and residents about tenant issues. An important challenge is how to establish permanent legal support of tenants.

About rental housing in future Russia

We are sure the rental sector will be larger and tenants will be more protected and more respected, sometime in the future!

Scotland

Tenant Participation Advisory Service Scotland, TPAS Scotland

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About TPAS Scotland

TPAS Scotland is the first and longest established organisation of its kind in the UK, formed in 1982. We are a membership organisation, managed by a board of 12 people, 6 tenant representatives and 6 landlord representatives. We have a small staff team who work all over Scotland.

Scotland's diverse population is scattered across cities, towns, villages, and in remote, rural and island communities. We work hard to ensure that tenants who live in remote rural or island communities, whose first language may not be English, who have a learning or support need or who are in a hard to reach group eg. young people, have equality of opportunity to participate.

Positive experiences, and outcomes

Our most important activities in recent years have been working with the Scottish Government and tenants and landlords across Scotland to develop the Scottish Social Housing Charter – this will be used as the measure to assess landlord's performance.

Scotland's Government has introduced a wide range of new legislation which strengthen tenants' rights and positively encourages tenant participation. TPAS Scotland has been working closely with tenants to ensure their views are heard in Government. We are learning that the old traditional methods of participation – meetings etc. are not so effective and we are trying to be more creative in getting tenants involved. Although we have tenant participation in legislation in Scotland it's an easy subject to cut funds, we have to remind landlords that tenants have rights in law.

Future challenges for tenants, and for TPAS Scotland

Although Scotland has its own government which deals with housing, the UK Government has responsibility for welfare benefits. The UK Government has undertaken a programme of changes and cuts to the welfare benefit system which will impact on tenants and their ability to pay their rent. We are concerned about the impacts these changes will have on tenants and their communities.

The system for regulating and monitoring housing has undergone huge changes with the introduction of the Scottish Social Housing Charter and the new Scottish Housing Regulator. Landlords will be expected to provide evidence that



TPAS Scotland's office in Glasgow.

tenants have been involved in monitoring performance and improving services. We are supporting many tenant scrutiny projects to enable tenants to have an impact on improving their landlord's services.

As the UK economy is still in recession, organisations are feeling the effects and are reluctant to buy in services from TPAS and other organisations, instead they are trying to do it in house. We have had a challenging couple of years, but continue to provide high quality services in an increasingly competitive market, and while our team is smaller we still exist.

About rental housing in future Scotland

The Right-to-Buy has had a massive impact on housing supply in Scotland, but the Scottish Government has introduced new legislation recently which means; new tenants will not have the right to buy, new build homes will not have the right to be sold, and existing tenants with the right to buy will lose that right, they will be given a time within which they must use their right or lose it. While these measures are to be applauded they will not replace houses lost through the Right to Buy, but it is a positive step to ensure supply will increase. The Scottish Government has recently increased the grant to housing organisations to build new homes.

We hope to return to a time where people can take a pride in renting their home, and a move away from the idea that buying is best.

Rented housing still has a major role to play in future Scotland.



Slovakia

Právo na bývanie

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About Right to Housing

From its foundation in 2006 the activities of the Civic Association Right to Housing

have been focused on achieving a durable and just solution of the housing situation of the 'sitting tenants' in Slovakia. These are tenants living in houses which have been handed over to private owners within the denationalization of property after the 1990 or handed over within the process of privatization. Besides following this strategic goal, the association has

also followed and commented the Slovak housing policy.

Positive experiences, and outcomes

In 2011 the Slovak Parliament adopted legislative Acts which have the ambition to bring a final solution of the 'sitting tenants' problem. The mentioned legal norms were adopted despite the strong disapproval of the people concerned – the 'sitting tenants'.

The Right to Housing which represents the vast majority of the Slovak sitting tenants considers the mentioned acts unjust and discriminatory. Therefore two complaints to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg have been submitted – the first in February 2012, with 201 applicants, and the second one in May 2013, with 55 applicants. These two complaints as well as constant pressure on the official authorities on different levels brought about a dialogue between the governmental institutions and association Right to Housing.

The association Right to Housing has been able to organize people for public meetings, visits to politicians and even despite limited financial resources we managed to issue one edition of the magazine 'Right to Housing'.

All the mentioned activities contributed to the fact that the government keeps up the dialogue with 'sitting tenants'. The politicians have to deal with the problem despite the prevalent tendency throughout the political scene to leave the 'sitting tenants' issue unsolved.

In this context the civic association Right to Housing would like to mention that the membership and cooperation with the IUT – among others the letter of the IUT President and IUT Secretary



General addressed to the Slovak Prime Minister – positively contributed to the respectability of the association in the eyes of the Slovak politicians.

Future challenges for tenants, and for Right to Housing

For the future the strategic goals remains the same – to achieve a fair solution for 'sitting tenants'. Also, tenant's rights are still relatively weak in Slovakia, which is not an acceptable situation.

About rental housing in future Slovakia

Similar to some other post-communist countries, due to a massive and state organized privatization of the public housing stock, rental housing became a marginalised sector in Slovakia. During the last 10 years each government has declared its intentions to develop a rental sector as a priority. Unfortunately those statements have remained only declaratory. The major problem is that the Slovak governmental institutions are unwilling to invest the necessary financial means and rely only on conservative economic attitudes.

Spain

Federació d'Associacions de Veïns d'Habitatge Social de Catalunya, FAVIBC

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About FAVIBC

Catalonian neighbourhood associations, AAVV, have existed already since 1968 and coincided with the new social movements in Europe and North America, of that time. FAVIBC is an Entity of reference in Catalan public housing.

The task of FAVIBC has been to solve regular housing matters, and overall social needs of the residents. FAVIBC works with different social projects for improving the social life in the neighbourhoods and encourages the consolidation of new social movements.

FAVIBC's task covers the whole range of neighbourhood activities and is everywhere to be seen in the everyday life of the Catalonian neighbourhoods. FAVIBC works with the resident's associations and works with the local, autonomic and state institutions in the improvement of the communities.

One important objective is the implementation of the different pro-

jects in social housing neighbourhoods: assisting residents, participates in changing dormant and socially weak housing areas to well functioning and lively neighbourhoods. FAVIBC always works under the umbrella of 'tenant participation':

- actions to improve habitability and life quality of social neighbourhoods
- actions to combat the social exclusion
- actions headed to the creation of networks

Positive experiences, and outcomes.

A lot of FAVIBC's tasks result from work in social policy:

- creation and first works in the Commission of Immigration,
- commission of Construction; tasks of negotiation and follow-up of new rebuilding plan, PDOR,
- commission of Volunteering,
- follow-ups and evaluation of projects with local, autonomic and state administrations.
- commission of programs with the Agency of Housing in Catalonia.

The projects have resulted in more cohesion of the diverse population groups: old people, youngsters, families with young children, women, and immigrants, etc. We prioritize those people whose situation is more vulnerability. The activities

aimed at families have include practise on how to face situations of interpersonal conflicts, emotional problems and stop-crises actions.

In 2012 we developed more than 200 projects, with more than 700 activities and the participation of more than 200 entities and 150 services. They have constituted 45 technical territorial teams, 108 spaces of reflection and more than 30 commissions of work. The direct users were 24,500 people and indirect close to 60,000.

Future challenges for tenants in Spain, and for FAVIBC

FAVIBC has achieved power work values, habits, promotion of participation, announced common spaces, as well as created spaces of meeting open to everybody. On the level of quality, it is necessary to remark the high degree of measured satisfaction, from all involved levels; the residents, entities, volunteers, as well as from FAVIBC.



The Federation has been investing efforts to support the creation of new entities, and also for the improvement of the channels of communication/coordination and the social networking already existent.

For the maximum development of these lines of work it is necessary to maintain a team of professionals who can develop organizational and administrative support.

Housing in future Spain

Today there are more than 1,200,000 empty homes in Spain, much because of the economic crisis. If already projected homes were added Spain could offer a home to almost the entire population of Norway!

People with few resources are victims of the earlier high increases of house prices. Today a home in the ownership market is 250% more expensive than a government subsidized social home. Also, the monthly cost for mortgage or rent is more than 65% of a normal wage.

Spain has to deal with a situation with many empty homes at the same time as many of the 500,000 undocumented migrants are homeless, together with thousands of people threatened by homelessness due to evictions. FAVIBC wants to convert some of the empty homes into rental homes with low rents.



Sweden

Hyresgästföreningen

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About SUT

Swedish Union of Tenants was founded in 1923, and has today 528,000 members, all households.

Membership fee is about €9 per month. All in all, in the 9 regions, the SUT employs some 750 staff, and organises 11,000 volunteers. President is Barbro

Engman, and CEO Jan Johnsson.

Members, staff and volunteers receive the monthly magazine, Hem & Hyra (Home & Rent), sent to 535,000 addressees.

Important activities

The main task for SUT is to annually negotiate the rents, for tenants in both the public and private sector in Sweden. The negotiations in recent years have resulted in quite moderate average rent increases; 2.45% for 2011 and 1.9% in 2012.

In 2011 a new law was implemented aiming at making public housing companies more business oriented, and as such they should act as private housing companies regarding rate of return.

The new legislation was a result of a complaint to the European Commission by the Swedish Property Federation (SPF). The dialogue with the government and through public lobbying the Swedish Union of Tenants influenced the outcome of the complaint so that market rents were avoided. We will continue negotiating rents with the housing companies.

Another new legislation was implemented on rents in subleases in tenant owned co-ops. Lessors can now set a rent covering their costs for housing loans, which they could not do previously. Practically it means market rents for the most exposed groups in the housing market in large cities. SUT criticized the new law arguing against market rents and making it worse for exposed groups.

Positive experiences, and outcomes

One of the strengths of the SUT is being an organization with many members. Mobilizing tenants in lobbying activities is also important to achieve results. Therefore, politicians have to listen to SUT's arguments. Another important factor is being politically independent. This has made it possible for SUT to influence the government regarding the issues described; new legislation on public companies and legislation on subleases.

Future challenges for tenants, and for SUT

Swedish politicians have backed out and left the housing issues unsolved. Housing has become an issue for the market and its actors. This has to change and SUT will work systematically to make housing an important subject for politicians, for the general elections in September 2014. The issues are:

- The shortage of affordable rental housing and its consequences; almost half of the 290 municipalities in Sweden have a shortage of housing. The challenge includes advocacy on municipal planning and regulations, building costs and political ambitions on housing.
- The tax system is not neutral for owned vs. rented dwellings. SUT advocates tenure neutrality meaning that the method of financing and the tax system should not distort consumer choices.
- The housing areas built in the 1960's and 1970's, which are approx. 600,000 dwellings, are subject to large scale renovations. The financing, decision-making process and especially the tenant influence are critical issues.
- The Swedish Property Federation and the private landlords continue to argue for market rents, but there are no Swedish political parties that support such a development. Additionally, no political party favours the European model with social housing. But this can be changed.

About rental housing in future Sweden

There is a major consensus among political parties, organizations and companies about the importance of rental housing in Sweden. Rental housing is now considered as a key issue in the labour market. There are differences on how to accomplish increased building, especially to affordable costs.

In order to function, large cities and developing regions have increasing populations who demand more housing. Rental apartments will be an important part to handle growth and welfare issues.

Switzerland

Schweizerischer Mieterinnen- und Mieterverband, SMV
Association suisse des locataires, ASLOCA

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About the Swiss Tenants Association

The first tenant associations in Switzerland appeared in the early twentieth century in the major cities. At the time, the main objective was better and cheaper fuel supply for tenants. Tenant associations organized the purchase of coal and wood and of heating equipment which were provided for to the members under favourable conditions.

The Swiss tenants association has 3 regional sections, one for each of the three main linguistic regions, with head offices in Zürich, Geneva and Massagno. Altogether there are 30 local sections and the three organisations have more than 210,000 individual members.

The association is a political lobbyist for the interests of the tenants towards the landlords, the Federal Parliament, the cantonal and municipal parliaments as well as the authorities.

Also, the association is a professional

services company that offers its members a diverse range of services around rents and housing.

About renting in Switzerland

In Switzerland 60% of the population lives in rental accommodations, and almost 85% of the households in Geneva rent.

There is an acute shortage of available housing; the vacancy rate is only 0.94% in Switzerland, but even worse in Zürich (0.56%) and in Geneva (0,30%).

Rents are unregulated in Switzerland except for in the public social sector which represents only 14% of the total rental stock.

Private tenants have the right to contest their rents in court, but only within 30 days after receiving the keys. This is a very short notice and most tenants are not even aware of this right or are afraid to use it.

There is no minimum duration of leases and an owner can cancel a contract without due reason. Unfortunately neither the federal state nor the 26 cantons are willing to change this situation, as the vast majority of the members of the Swiss Parliament are right wing.

The construction of new buildings is left to the private sector and every attempt to improve tenants' rights is opposed to and most often refused.

In 2011 and 2012 we had to fight against three federal projects that wanted to pro-



ASLOCA demonstration in Lausanne.

mote home ownership without any equivalent for tenancy. These three projects were clearly rejected by the Swiss population after intensive, and costly, campaigns.

Today's and future challenges

We are presently lobbying the Federal government and the Cantonal governments to have them to build more social housing. Today there is no federal, and very limited cantonal, support for the construction of new social housing, in spite of the acute shortage. Of course, the private sector, which owns 92% of all the residential buildings, is not interested in building social housing, but wants more condominiums or luxurious flats.

To obtain our aims, we consider launching a federal initiative in order to change the Swiss constitution. In order to do this we need 100,000 signatures for a referendum, which could take place in three or four years.

Also we ask that the Swiss government takes measures to open up its borders to the European labour market, and to accompany such initiatives with increased construction of housing. It is not possible to attract and welcome new businesses without additional dwellings to accommodate their employees.

On the legal side, we are also trying to find ways of improving tenants' rights against rent increase and eviction. We will also need the support of the Swiss population, as we cannot rely on the Parliament.

PHOTO: ASLOCA

Wales

TPAS Wales/ Cymru

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About TPAS Wales

TPAS Wales/Cymru has supported social housing tenants and landlords in Wales for over 20 years and has a strong track record in developing effective participation through training, support, practical projects and policy development. We have an extensive knowledge of social housing with a focus on issues from the tenant perspective and for tenants' benefit

TPAS Wales/Cymru is a non-profit membership organization with a membership including over 200 tenant groups, and almost all social landlords in Wales. We are managed by a committee of representatives from each of the categories of our membership.

TPAS Wales/Cymru promotes participation by tenants with social landlords and other public services to improve homes and communities.

Our major roles are:

- Supporting members, by advising and supporting tenants and landlords to enable tenant participation in decision making and action on a range of housing and community issues.
- Sharing experience and best practice, by

gathering and disseminating best practice to improve the effectiveness of tenant participation in housing and community issues.

- Influencing policy, promoting participation, by monitoring policies affecting tenants and social housing, and gathering views and experience of tenants and landlords to respond to policy developments, Also by promoting tenant participation as a right and an effective contribution to housing management.

TPAS Wales' most important activities in the past two years

a. Developing participation strategies with all social landlords and their tenants.

TPAS Cymru has been the flag bearer in developing participation strategies through providing guidance, training, practical support, and assessing all strategies on behalf of Welsh Government to provide learning and advice.

The result of this work has been a step

change in quality of participation, though still variable. Key learning about good practice has been accepted around integrating participation throughout landlord staff; having a 'pyramid of participation' with a base of varied methods reaching out to all groups of tenants; tenants involved in decision making and performance monitoring; and focusing on outcomes from services from the tenant perspective.

b. Promoting tenants role in self-assessment of social landlords as part of developing a new regulatory framework.

We have contributed to shaping the regulatory framework with the role of tenants as central in self-assessment of performance and subsequent planning for improvement. We have led in devising delivery outcomes for regulation which are genuinely outcome and tenant focused.

c. Developing guidance and practice to increase the involvement of service users living in supported housing.

We enabled service users from sup-

ported housing organizations to say how they want to be involved in the new Welsh government Supporting People Programme. This included strengthening guidance to involve service users in the planning, commissioning and reviewing of support services and in evidencing impact. We are supporting the sector to develop Service User Involvement Frameworks with service users and in reviewing a range of care and support services.

d. Strengthening the basis of social housing and the security of private sector tenants.

We have contributed to working groups on the first two devolved housing bills for Wales.

These bills include: *Firstly*, a Welsh view on the value and scope of social rented housing that differs radically from the UK government which is pushing social housing to a residual and temporary tenure. *Secondly*; financial and other means to expand building for social renting and development of co-operative housing. *Thirdly*; for the standardizing of tenancy agreements across social housing and private rented sectors, along with registration and regulation of the private rented sector to improve quality and security for tenants.

Future challenges for tenants in Wales?

The biggest challenges facing tenants are the casting of social housing as a residual tenure, and cuts to welfare benefits which push tenants into debt, threaten their tenancies, and pose financial viability threat to social landlords. These threats come from the UK government but the Welsh government is working to tray and mitigate impacts.





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