

# GLOBAL TENANT



INTERNATIONAL UNION OF TENANTS' QUARTERLY MAGAZINE April 2009



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from Amsterdam

Photo: Magnus Hammar, IUT

## Freedom to choose – but only for a few

It often strikes me that people who rent have similar problems wherever they live in the world. Of course, the situation is not comparable standard wise, and housing rights are varying – but it seems to me that as the discussions among tenants tend to touch on a lot of the same issues; rent levels, cleaning of staircases, invisible landlords and politics that is unfavorable to tenants.

Politicians seem to have the idea that everyone's aspiration is to be a homeowner. But ask any new homeowner in England today who is stuck with mortgages they cannot pay and houses they can not sell, and they might be of another opinion.

Right to Buy has not only been heavily promoted in England, but also by politicians in Sweden. Flats in houses owned by the Swedish municipalities are now being sold to the sitting tenants, and most times it's "an offer you cannot refuse", as these flats are sold well under market values.

Flats in houses in prime locations are of course most attractive, like in the inner city of Stockholm where they generate large gains when sold. Investments in housing and construction of rental housing are slowing down considerably. Soon there will be very few affordable rental flats left in the inner city of Stockholm.

The housing stock which is currently being sold for bargain prices is, as I see it, the property of all taxpayers as these houses were once built with substantial state subsidies.

But, the lust to buy is not very high in the suburbs of Stockholm, much to the disappointment of the governing parties in the City Hall. The interest is particularly low in the large panel houses from the 1960's and

70's. These houses are in great need of refurbishment and energy saving renovation.

The share of rental housing in Sweden is steadily decreasing, partly due to a tax system which clearly favours homeownership, as a 30 percent tax-relief on interest is available.

Since 2007 we have had a government which has, almost without exception, promoted home ownership. Combined with the selling of public housing, gentrification is speeded up and segregation and exclusion increase. The municipal queue for a rental flat in Stockholm has increased by 100 percent since 2005, and today over 250,000 people are on the waiting list. The government's speech about the holy "freedom of choice" rings falsely in the ears of all those in this queue.

The present government strives to make the rental market more competitive. Dark clouds are building up for all tenants in Sweden, in the public as well as in the private sector. These clouds spell "market rents" – unaffordable to the majority.

The Swedish Union of Tenants, with its almost 540,000 members, works hard to save the "Swedish Model" where well built rental housing at affordable costs has been a major ingredient since the 1950's.



Ewa Frisk  
Swedish Union  
of Tenants /  
Hyresgästföreningen

## Calendar

**April 21–22:** UN ECE Workshop on Energy Efficiency in Housing, Sofia Bulgaria

**April 28:** FEANTSA conf; Local Homeless strategies, in Brussels Belgium

**May 6–8:** Congress of SICET, in Rimini, Italy

**May 18–19:** Workshop on Homelessness, by UN ECE, Husbanken, FEANTSA in Oslo Norway

**May 21–24:** Congress of CNL, Confédération Nationale du Logement, in Lille France

**May 26:** European Neighbours' Day / Fête Européenne des Voisins

**June 4–6:** Congress of Deutscher Mieterbund (German Tenant Union) in Leipzig.

**June 26–July 1:** "Changing Housing Markets: Integration and Segmentation" ENHR conference in Prague, Czech Republic.

**July 31–Aug. 2:** TPAS England Annual Conference & AGM, in Birmingham, England

**August 5–7:** 4th Australasian Housing Researchers Conference, in Sydney

**September 9–11:** Australasian Residential Tenancies Conference, Gold Coast, Queensland

**September 23–25:** UN ECE, 70th session of the Committee on Housing and Land Management, Geneva

**October 5:** International Tenants' Day

**October 31–Nov 1:** Congress of the Danish Tenant Association, LLO, in Odense Denmark

**November 25–27:** The 6th National Australian Housing Conference, in Melbourne

**For more info:** [www.iut.nu/conferences.htm](http://www.iut.nu/conferences.htm)



# IUT members report on the financial crises and affects on rental housing

## European Union:

### Can 8 billion new euros for housing ease effects of the financial crises?

On April 2nd the European Parliament voted on the opening of the structural funds for housing.

8 billion euro from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) can now be used for the energy-efficient refurbishment of the existing housing stock.

All 27 EU-member states can apply for this funding, which is guaranteed until 2013.

More info from [www.iut.nu](http://www.iut.nu)

## The Netherlands:

### The crisis as an opportunity for social housing

The crisis has had a heavy impact on society. Building production in the housing sector is decreasing rapidly. Many homeowners have serious problems in selling their houses, and dropping prices. Tenants might soon experience difficulties in finding new rentals, because of the general housing shortage.

In connection with the crises the Nederlandse Woonbond (Dutch Union of Tenants) has, together with Aedes, the organisation of Dutch social landlord, drawn public attention to the social housing sector. The social housing sector should seize the opportunity to build rental housing and take over building projects from commercial developers, who run into difficulties, and to convert them into rental housing. The Dutch housing associations have the possibility to manage this, because today they have easier access to financing compared with commercial companies.

At the end of March the Dutch government decided to stimulate short term investments in new buildings and energy reduction, for example by giving social landlords more financial possibilities to build and buy houses, and tax reduc-



tion for investments in energy efficiency measures. The government has adopted most of the proposals of the Woonbond and Aedes.

Text: Ronald Paping, Director of the Nederlandse Woonbond.

## England:

### Lack of credit and long waiting lists

The lack of available credit is having a major impact on social housing providers, particularly within the housing association sector. Development of new social housing has been the domain of the housing association sector in recent years. This is reliant upon leveraging in private sector funding to match public sector grants. However, there has been a reduction in the number of institutions lending to housing associations, and those that remain have increased the cost of lending dramatically.

There is already a considerable shortage of affordable housing with approximately 1 million people on social housing waiting lists and 100,000 people being classified as statutory homeless.

The Homes and Communities Agency have relaxed the eligibility criteria for developments in receipt of public subsidy. This assists with ensuring a continuing flow of affordable housing into

the sector, whilst also assists mass house builders, traditionally active in the private sector, to continue to develop new properties.

There has been a considerable slowing down of shared ownership sales within the social housing sector as prospective shared owners find it increasingly difficult to access mortgage finance to purchase this form of housing tenure. Housing associations are in turn seeking to turn such housing into rented accommodation where additional grant is required.

Text: Darren Hartley, T.A.R.O.E. (Tenants and Residents Organisations of England)

### Large increase of private rentals

According to Inside Housing magazine (April 3) desperate homeowners are renting their homes out, because they

*continued on page 19*



# Woonbond signs covenant on energy-saving

**The Nederlandse Woonbond (Dutch Union of Tenants) has signed a covenant on Energy-saving in the Housing Corporation Sector. The other participants are the Ministry of Housing and Aedes, the association of Dutch housing corporations. The target is to save a substantial amount of energy in the existing social housing stock and to lower the energy consumption across the range of new building production by housing corporations.**

The ambitions relate to the building-related energy consumption for heating, hot running water and ventilation. The covenant makes it possible to save at least 20 percent on gas consumption in the existing housing stock over the next ten years.

## Teaching tenants

Aedes and the Woonbond aim primarily at their own members, but where it is possible also at other housing corporations and tenants organisations. For taking energy-saving measures by housing corporations, maximum possible integration is sought with natural opportunities, such as upgrades and planned maintenance. In addition, the opportunities of major maintenance, home improvements and restructuring are also exploited and special campaigns are carried out in connection with the measures. Furthermore, the parties are endeavouring to influence behaviour of tenants through awareness and information campaigns.

## Lower living costs

An important agreement is that Aedes and the Woonbond are endeavouring to ensure that the energy-saving measures lead to lower living costs for tenants immediately after renovations. That means that the reduction in monthly electricity and gas bills as a consequence

of the changes is greater than the increases of the rent.

Aedes and the Woonbond encourage energy-saving measures with measures to improve the quality of the indoor environment and living comfort. Special attention is paid to deterring use of gas (water) heaters and other open combustion appliances. They will stimulate agreements at a local level on energy saving by housing corporations and tenant organisations. The ensuing consultation must lead to an implementation plan with activities and energy-saving measures in the short and medium-term. Aedes and the Woonbond shall promote local agreements by means of:

- awareness-raising and incentives;
- information provision (checklist for local agreements) and pilot projects;
- facilitation of local consultation;
- Advice to housing or tenant organisations, exchange of knowledge and networks of corporations.

The Woonbond has already formed a

team of specialists to realize the formulated goals. This is made possible by subsidies from the Ministry of Housing, VROM.

## Save energy with the Woonbond

Two important services are already being offered to the Dutch tenants, the Energielijn (Energy-saving desk) and the Energiebus (Energy bus). Any tenant, who has a question about saving energy in house, can call the Energielijn. Any organisation of tenants who wants an advice from the energy team about the possibilities to upgrade the energy performance of a block of houses (apartments) can contact the Energiebus, which will come for a visit as soon as possible. They write a report upon the situation and if necessary they accompany the tenants when they present the report to the landlord.

By Hans Roseboom, Nederlandse Woonbond, e-mail [hroseboom@woonbond.nl](mailto:hroseboom@woonbond.nl)

Photo: Woonbond



Energy advisor of the Woonbond (Dutch Union of Tenants) measuring the humidity in the wall.



Building manager Darrell Sinclair stands in front of the Marr Hotel, a Single Room Occupancy hotel in Vancouver's troubled Downtown Eastside recently bought by the British Columbian provincial government and now managed by a non-profit company.

CANADA

## Olympic effects on renters in Vancouver

**With the 2010 Winter Olympics less than a year away, housing observers are bracing for what they predict will be hard times for renters in Vancouver.**

"We have 300,000 people projected to be coming to Vancouver in February 2010 for the Olympics and we have just short of 30,000 hotel rooms," said David Eby, a housing advocate and executive director of the BC Civil Liberties Association. "So there are 270,000 visitors coming to Vancouver looking for accommodations, other than hotel room."

This demand, predicted Eby, will give landowners a strong profit motive to evict tenants, something housing consultant Jim Green agrees with.

"If you can rent your unit for two weeks for \$5000, that's a pretty good incentive to evict the tenants, clean up the joint and then turn it into a condo later or charge higher rents."

### Renters are being squeezed

The concern has led to proposals for new laws to protect tenants, and to strengthen others that arose in the fallout of Vancouver's last major international event, EXPO 86, which saw large-scale evictions of tenants from low-rent

single room occupancy (SRO) hotels in the City's troubled Downtown Eastside. The question is whether the City and Province will enforce these new laws. Even without evictions, renters are being squeezed by other factors. Between 2001 and 2006 the net amount of existing rental housing has gone down four percent in Metro Vancouver and 44 percent of renters now spend more than 30 percent of their income on rent. The vacancy rate, which is now at just 0.5 percent, is near an all-time low.

### More, or less, affordable housing?

On the front of new social housing, the record is mixed. The affordable housing promised, as part of the Olympics legacy at the Athlete's Village – a large waterfront development near the City's downtown, might not proceed. In 2005 the city cut the social and affordable housing component from 66% to 20% and has recently suggested it may need to cut this to 0% following cost overruns and the City's \$1 billion takeover of the project.

On the other hand many believe the Olympics are directly responsible for a number of other social housing initiatives, such as the Woodward's redevelopment that has 200 social housing units and the Province's recent purchase and repair of 24 SRO hotels in the Down-



town Eastside. That initiative has resulted in the protection of 1200 units of low-cost housing that many considered vulnerable to Olympic conversion.

The Province has also announced it will be building 1400 more units of supportive housing throughout the City. Green says these initiatives would never have happened without the Olympics.

### Future will tell

"We have done pretty well if you compare it to EXPO 86, when the Provincial Government was absolutely delighted at the people being evicted from their hotels – they called it slum clearance. It's a very different attitude now," said Green. "The Olympics will bring the issue of the Downtown Eastside to the entire world, and I believe that is going to stimulate more action to deal properly with the issues of the Downtown Eastside," Green said to the Globe and Mail.

Text & Photo: James Steidle. James is a freelance writer in Vancouver, Canada, whom TRAC, Tenant Resource & Advisory Centre, commissioned to write this article.





# U.S. Tenant Movement

## Experiencing a Renaissance

**Building Strength for New Challenges, from NAHT, National Alliance of HUD Tenants – the only national tenant voice in the US.**

Following the election victory of the only presidential candidate who agreed to meet with tenant groups, US organizers are starting to pool their resources and ideas, as the Obama team ushers in

an era of dramatically improved relations between policymakers and organized tenants. There are clear signs that after eight years of hostility to programs supporting low-income tenants, a different climate in Washington with a former tenant organizer in charge is expanding the ability of local groups to strengthen the tenant base. The National Alliance of HUD Tenants (NAHT), a grassroots network of tenant organizers and advo-

cates around the country, finds itself growing every day.

### **A receptive ear in Washington**

Keeping in mind that politicians, even allies, are only as accountable as their constituents can hold them, NAHT member groups have found a receptive ear from the new secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the government's housing





NAHT rally in Boston, June 2008, at a building (Waverly Apartments) bought by a multinational Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT).



port many key concerns. These include passing legislation already in Congress, to give tenants or nonprofit owners a Right to Purchase buildings where the current for-profit owners are deciding to leave the HUD subsidy program. Also, Donovan agreed to support tenants' rights to organize, a shift from the Bush administration's politically motivated anti-tenant policies which caused the demise of many groups and left tenants in large parts of the country without any organizing resources at all.

#### Watch out for "over leveraging"

One large problem which the global tenant movement will soon have to confront is the emerging threat of "over-leveraging", where banks lend huge sums of money to large corporate speculators to buy subsidized buildings. However, residents are then at risk if landlords convert units to market rents or foreclose due to downturns in the market. In New York City alone, where NAHT affiliates have been leading an initiative to document this problem, tenant groups estimate that over 70,000 units, housing mainly low and moderate-income residents, are at risk from these highly risky loans. With the massive public resources going into keeping the banking industry alive, NAHT is proposing that conditions be attached to these funds, requiring recipients to undertake reforms in lending practices which would lead to preservation. However, since global capital is the culprit, international connections between housing groups will be needed to find a proper solution.

#### NAHT promotes UN convention

In addition, NAHT is working for US ratification of the International Cov-

enant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, ratified by nearly 160 other countries, and which provides for a Right to Housing. To this end, several housing organizations will host the UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Raquel Rolnik, on a tour of troubled areas like New Orleans, New York and Chicago later this year. The hope is that official recognition of this right will provide an improved climate to organize for adequate housing.

Progressive forces here recognize the obstacles to housing justice in such a rich country, but are working together with allies around the world for a day when we will all be free of shameful failures like wretched living conditions and rampant homelessness.

By Alex Papali, NAHT,  
alexpapali@saveourhomes.org

agency. The new chief, Shaun Donovan, was most recently in charge of housing for New York City, and before that was a deputy at HUD in the Clinton years. Thus he understands the sheer numbers of tenants involved, and that NAHT is the only network organized at the local, national and international levels, representing tenants in the 1.3 million privately-owned units of what is known as 'HUD-subsidized multifamily housing.'

#### Tenants' right to organize

In both positions, he worked with organized tenant groups, and saw the depth of the movement as well as the benefits for policymakers, who often lack tools to judge the effectiveness of their policies on the ground. He has already met with the NAHT board, and pledged to sup-

#### About NAHT

Established in 1991, the mission of the National Alliance of HUD Tenants is to preserve and improve affordable housing, protect tenants' rights, develop tenant empowerment, promote resident control and ownership, improve the quality of life in HUD-assisted housing and to make HUD accountable to its constituents, HUD tenants.

NAHT is the first national membership organization of resident groups advocating for 2.1 million lower income families in privately-owned, HUD-assisted multifamily housing.  
[www.saveourhomes.org](http://www.saveourhomes.org)





New rental development in Dublin. Photo: Centre for Housing Research, Dublin.

## Housing in Ireland

**The Republic of Ireland has a population of some 4.24 million people. It is one of the smaller EU countries, on the western periphery. There are 1.47 million private households, 43 per cent live in detached, 27 per cent in semi-detached and 18 per cent in terraced houses. Apartment living is not common making up about 10 per cent of accommodation, but it is increasingly popular.**

Most households in Ireland own their home – just under three quarters of

all households live in owner-occupied houses. A third of households own their homes outright, which a further two-fifths own with a mortgage. About one-fifth of households rent – 7 per cent from the local authority (social renting) and 13 per cent in the private sector. Between 2006 and 1991, the proportion of private renting has almost doubled (from 7 per cent in 1991) while the proportion of local authority renting has decreased (from 10 per cent in 1991). The voluntary and co-operative housing sector accounts for 23,000 units. This sector tends to focus on the accommodation needs of local income families and those with special needs (mainly older

people, homelessness and people with disabilities).

### **Housing boom ran out of steam**

Like many other countries, Ireland is currently experiencing considerable problems in relation to the housing market. A housing boom, which began in the mid-1990's has reversed in the last twelve months. Housing contraction, which had reached over 90,000 units per year by 2006, has fallen back considerably to just below 52,000 by the end of 2008. House prices, which increased three-fold since the mid 1990s have also reduced considerably. It is estimated that there are in the region of 200,000 vacant proper-



ties in the system. Construction unemployment is an increasing problem; the tax take from property transactions has also reduced considerably.

### Growing private sector

As stated above, the private rented sector is a growing sector in Ireland. The Private Residential Tenancies Board ([www.prtb.ie](http://www.prtb.ie)) has a statutory responsibility to register private residential tenancies; it also operates a dispute resolution service, provides information and carries out research on the sector. It was established under the Residential Tenancies Act, 2004. Landlords are obliged to register tenancies with the PRTB – there are currently almost a quarter of a million tenancies registered. Disputes are referred to the PRTB in about one per cent of tenancies.

The main dispute lodged by tenants is allegations of deposit retention, while for landlords it is rent arrears. Along with the general slow-down in the property market, the asking price for rental property has also reduced – by an estimated 12 percent nationally.

### Improving the standards

Local authorities are responsible for the enforcement of standards in the private rented sector. New funding mechanisms have recently been put in place to encourage increased inspection activity by local

authorities. This has led to increased inspection activity – almost 7,000 inspections took place in 2005, this had doubled to a little over 14,000 in 2007. New standards were also introduced earlier this year (February 2009) which will see, among other changes, the phasing out of bedsit accommodation (i.e. one room units) in the sector, improved heating requirements, and more modern standards in relation to food storage and preparation, refuse and laundry, ventilation, lighting and fire safety. .

### One in ten is an immigrant

Ireland has become more ethnically and culturally diverse in recent years – between 2002 and 2006 the number of foreign citizens resident in the country almost doubled. Immigration from other EU member states made the largest contribution to this change. Now one in ten of the population are non-Irish nationals. High proportions of these households are living in the private rented sector and some consideration has been given to ensuring building integrated neighbourhoods.

While the supply of local authority housing has declined as a proportion of all households, the numbers of those found in housing need has risen. Local authorities are required to undertake an assessment of housing need at least

every three years. The last assessment was undertaken in March, 2008 and it recorded a 31 per cent increase in net housing need since the last assessment (2005).

The quality of the housing stock would generally be considered good. The main issues would be in relation to the insulation of older houses, urban sprawl (particularly in the Eastern region) and the need for regeneration of some disadvantaged areas.

### Rents are finally declining

The affordability of accommodation is another key issue in Ireland. House prices and rents in the private residential sector are now in decline, but from high levels. While mortgage interest rates have also reduced, unemployment has risen sharply.

The policy focus in the last two years has been on creating and maintaining sustainable communities – communities where people want to live, which address their needs, based on good quality planning, which are socially and environmentally sound and have high quality of life. The recent changes to the housing market provide challenges to achieving this aim, but also opportunities to do so.

Text: David Silke, Director, Centre for Housing Research in Dublin, [www.chrie](http://www.chrie)



Ógra Shinn Féin have launched throughout Dublin, its campaign to highlight the vast quantity of housing opportunities left unused in the city whilst tens of thousands of people, with more every year are in need of suitable affordable housing.

# New Zealand, where housing is never given the focus – it deserves

**New Zealand held a general election in November 2008 and the Labour Party coalition government was defeated. It was replaced by a right of centre government, led by the National Party and supported by the Maori Party and the Act Party.**

It should be noted that the National Party, who were last in government 9 years ago, opted for electability over their ideological roots. But now that they are in government they have been quick to return to their failed policies from the past.

## **No rental culture**

Housing in New Zealand is never given the focus it deserves, as there is no rental culture, unlike Europe. Renting has somehow been regarded as a temporary, short-term practice. However the student loan scheme and free market economy has changed all that.

New Zealand had one of the highest rates of home ownership in the western world. Much of the credit for this was given to various governments who were committed to home ownership and supported government assistance programs for first home owners. However, the National Government in 1993 scrapped all these assistance programs, so New Zealanders had to go to a bank to try and secure a mortgage. The rest, as they say, is history, as home ownership rates dropped considerably, to one of the lowest rates in the western world.

## **Tribunal used by landlords**

The Residential Tenancies Act 1986, which covers the rights and obligations of both landlords and tenants, is a good piece of legislation, which removes the law of the jungle in tenancy disputes.

The Tenancy Tribunal is where most disputes end up, landlords use this service more than tenants, and 92 % of applications are from landlords, the remaining 8% from tenants. Housing is about social power and these figures just confirm that. The accommodation supplement is the



Students Fran Reilly and Nicola Hay on the porch of one of the old villas owned by Massey University, Palmerston North. These almost 100 year old houses are let to students and others affiliated with the University. Photo: Kevin Reilly

main housing benefit used by tenants. New Zealand taxpayers contribute 1 billion dollars in landlord support packages (accommodation supplement/income related rents) yet they represent only 5% of the general population.

## **Tenants move on**

The rental accommodation market is run by private investors who make up around 84 % of the rental market. Central government and local government make up around 14–15 %. Out of interest, local councils make up less than 1 % of rental housing, mostly pensioner housing.

It is the bond monies from tenants which fund, along with some taxpayer dollars, the Tenancy Services in New Zealand. Tenants pay at least 3 weeks rent in bond, as well as 2 weeks rent in advance. So changing location can be an expensive business, yet most tenants move on every 10 months, on average.

The present National led government only intends to build 69 new state houses, and upgrade other state housing.

## **Selling of state houses**

The stock of government state houses is around 66,000. It also intends to sell some of this stock to tenants. This was tried in National's last term in government, and was a disaster for tenants. 92% of the 13,000 plus houses sold, were snapped up by private investors, who paid much less than the 8% of tenants who were in a position to purchase their home.

Home ownership and rental affordability remain the priority for most New Zealanders, as we move into challenging times for all tenants.

By Kevin Reilly,  
Manawatu Tenants'  
Union coordinator







Crowded stret in Kathmandu.

## Housing Situation in Kathmandu, Nepal

**Kathmandu is one of the ancient and most beautiful cities of Asia. The name of the city is originated from Kasthamandap, meaning the house of wood. The same houses made of a single tree still exist in the center of the city.**

The old buildings, temples, and palaces are the center of attraction for both tourists and the local residents. Due to urbanization and so called modernization the highly fertile land for agriculture has been rapidly converted into housing for different purposes as well as roads and transportation facilities. Lack of decentralization of political and administrative powers, the tendency of the Nepalese people has been constantly remained to reside in Kathmandu either by building own house or renting or even staying illegally in the public lands, mainly in the river banks. In urban Kathmandu Valley, it is estimated that 40 percent of the population in Kathmandu is constituted by the migrant

population and more than 25% of the households live in rented housing units.

### Lack of governmental policies

The investments on land for housing purposes triggered due to the absence of other better economic opportunities in Nepal. Whatever saving comes from different sources including remittances goes to mainly purchasing either land for housing or already built houses in city areas, mainly in Kathmandu Valley. The Government of Nepal in general and municipalities of the Kathmandu Valleys in particular lack proper plans for housing in Kathmandu. Mainly brokers, who buy lands from the owners in big size and divide into several plots according to their own plan, have a tremendous role in new settlements in Kathmandu valley. Therefore the quality of housing and the settlements is very low.

### Invisible housing programs

Currently some private housing companies have emerged, who construct and sell modern style houses with

better facilities. However, there is not a single initiative from the public or government sector so far for the housing programs under some concrete settlements or land development programs. Haphazard and substandard development in Kathmandu valley is going on at a rapid rate. The every increasing flow of migrants causing overcrowding, congestion. The unsanitary living conditions and pollutions of different forms have been considered bad aspects of the beautiful valley. Therefore, the related individuals and institutions have to pay their proper attention on developing Kathmandu valley under most appropriate settlement and land development schemes.



Text by Punya Prasad Regmi, PhD, Development Planner at Nepal Development Research Institute, [info@ndri.org.np](mailto:info@ndri.org.np)  
Photo: Pavel Novak, by permission under "Free Cultural Works"



The Simy Tandika residential estate.



## TANZANIA

# Rapidly deteriorating housing situation

**The housing situation for Tanzanian tenants is extremely critical. To meet the most immediate demands, some 2,5 million houses have to be built in the next few years. For those having a place of their own, rents are souring. And when failing to pay the rent in time, people are evicted with almost no means of challenging merciless landlords in court.**

When Tanzania became a republic in 1962, decent housing for everyone was on top of the agenda. Now, almost fifty years on, the situation is different. There is an ongoing government program to improve the housing situation by establishing a Housing Policy Act. But investments in the building sector are minimal and with the current global recession being, not much is happening to remedy the housing crises.

As for tenants, things started to deter-

iorate when the Rent Restriction Act of 1984 was repealed and replaced by "the Land disputes Settlement Act of 2002. This new law is very favourable for the landlords resulting in extremely high rents, and the rents are constantly adjusted and increased by the landlords on their own merits.

Evictions are now the order of the day. If rents are not settled in time, households and other properties are confiscated to defray the unpaid arrears. Following this, there are now numerous ongoing tenant cases and disputes in the Housing tribunals and other law courts almost everywhere in this vast African country.

### IUT representation in Tanzania

The present situation calls for a strong and determined character to take on the battle with stubborn landlords and neglectful authorities. This is where Mr Ludger Bernard Nyoni, the president of the Tanzania Tenants Association (TTA), comes in. With a background in the political field as one of the founders of the ruling party

Chama Cha Mapundizi (CCM), Mr Nyoni knows the political game and has the right contacts to deal with politicians at all levels. He has also held important positions within the labour movement in Eastern Africa, fighting for the rights of hundreds of thousands of workers.

Meeting with Mr Nyoni in central Dar es Salaam, you can immediately sense the respect this elderly gentleman has gained over the years. Impeccably dressed in a dark suit with a fitting tie, despite the souring temperature, he is greeted cordially wherever he goes. This includes people of all ranks, including the kitchen staff at the small café where we meet. These are some of the people who rely on Mr Nyoni and TTA to find a descent housing situation.

### Public housing

As of today, most Tanzanian tenants, some 60 per cent, live in privately owned buildings. These are mostly small bungalows holding anything from four to ten families, each occupying a single room or two.



Living conditions in many of these flats are often poor. Many families may have to share the same toilet. And given the fact that the toilets are frequently out of work, one can easily imagine the pain.

A large number of tenants also live in houses under Public Housing Programmes, such as the National Housing Corporation, the biggest landlord, owing about 19 000 houses and Blocks of flats in the country.

Regardless of what type of flats tenants are renting, they mostly have neglecting landlords to deal with.

This is evident in most residential areas. Visiting Mrs H Chipa in the Simy Tandika residential area of Dar es Salaam, the lack of most basic services is apparent. The dark staircase leading up to the flat is pitch-dark without any lights and the staircase is so worn out that the risk of falling about is apparent. Entering the two-room flat, Mr Nyoni listens with great concern to Mrs Chipa's grievances; leaking pipes and constant water and electricity cuts, not to mention the ever rising rent.

For most tenants it is very hard to obtain a loan and its getting increasingly difficult with the economic depression at hand. And interest rate of 21 per cent is not uncommon.

The constant struggle for many families and households to earn money enough to pay the rent is not the only problem. Most landlords demand that the rent is paid at least six months in advance. Some even ask for an advance payment covering 12 months.

Advance payment of rents cuts deep into the economy of many families. With minimum monthly wages at only 80,000 Tanzanian Shillings, or some 60 US dol-



Mrs H Chipa in her bedroom in the Simy Tandika residential area, Dar es Salaam.

lars, typical rents are between 10,000 to 25,000 Shillings, or 8 to 20 US dollars.

– This system of advance payment is a problem of great concern to many tenants, says Mr Nyoni.

### **Selling of remaining rentals**

Despite the urgent need for new housing, very few houses are built. Only 762 new buildings catering for tenants were erected between 1990 and 2007, compared to 14 000 in the two previous decades. A growing number of houses and flats are being sold to its present tenants. So far this has mostly been the case with former civil servants and others being offered “social housing”, subsidized by the government. Now this habit of selling out the rented flats is extended to tenants with flats under the Public Housing Programmes.

– This adds to the problems already at hand, says Mr Nyoni, adding that there is nothing wrong with people being offered to buy their own flats. But this way, the flats will never be available to anyone else looking for some place to rent. The flats will leave the housing market for ever.

### **TTA is sole representative**

As a result of the rougher climate on the housing market, a growing number of

disputes are brought to court. But today many tenants are left at their own as the Tanzania Tenants Association, TTA, has lost its lawful right to be represented at court when housing disputes are challenged. Still, being registered at the Vice Presidents' Office, TTA should be entitled to be represented at courts.

– Without us in the courts, the lawyers take advantage of the situation as the tenants have no means to engage their own lawyer, says Mr Nyoni.

Being President of TTA involves also the Chairmanship of IUT Focal Point for Africa, FPA. The IUT -FPA brings together tenant representatives in Benin, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Kenya, Togo, Uganda, South Africa as well as from Tanzania.

Text and photos by David Dahmen, Freelance journalist & photographer, ddahmen@swipnet.se



Ludger B. Nyoni visits the Simy Tandika residential area in Dar es Salaam.

### **WANTED!**

We are looking for someone who who could assist us in translating articles of the Global Tenant to French. Please get in touch with us in Stockholm via [info@iut.nu](mailto:info@iut.nu)



Parts of old Shanghai which has not been demolished, yet.

## CHINA

# Affordable housing plan on the way

**The growing population of China's large cities has created huge housing problems. The growing middle classes want more space, and they now want to have more than only one child.**

Workers from rural parts of China poured into the cities and all needed some kind of accommodation. Even though thousands of recent laid off workers, due

to the slow down in construction, are returning to their provinces there are still many left without decent housing. The annual rate of urbanization in China increased from 19 % in 1980 to 44 % in 2006. PRC Bureau of Statistics suggests that 126 million rural migrant workers were living in urban areas in 2005.

### Large scale plans for new housing

According to the China Daily, the Shanghai municipality will in May present a plan on how to provide more afford-

able housing for people on low incomes. Liu Haisheng, director of the Shanghai municipal bureau of social housing and building administration stated that; "The plan aims to make housing more affordable to low- and middle-income families. Work began last year on the construction of more than 4 million sq m of affordable housing, and a similar amount will get under way this year. Shanghai has drawn on the experience of other countries and regions, like Singapore, Hong Kong and the UK, that have developed similar housing welfare systems",

### Millions of new homes

Some locals fear the new homes will be built in remote, out-of-town areas, making them difficult to commute to and from, but Director Liu reassures the public; "There is not enough room to build the homes in the downtown area, but the government will try to find space in the outer ring area that has good transport links, but, before any projects are launched, officials will garner public opinion"

In March Chinese Vice Premier Li Keqiang called for faster construction of affordable housing. The Chinese government has pledged that 7.5 million affordable homes will be provided in cities, and 2.4 million in forest districts, reclamation areas, and coal-mining regions by the end of 2011. This year, 2.6 million urban and 800,000 rural homes would be built. Another 800,000 rural homes in poor condition will be renovated.

Source: China Daily

Photo: David Johansson

## Slovenia:

### Tenants in denationalised flats

#### FEANTSA launches complaint vs. the Republic of Slovenia

Starting in 1991, Slovenian tenants in municipal housing could purchase their flats to nominal prices. This possibility was never given to the housing right holders of some 13.000 flats of previously, to 1945, privately owned houses. These tenants were simply offered to sign a rental lease with the new owners. Prior to 1991 all tenants shared the same legal status, with full housing rights and had inheritable contracts.



In September 2008 FEANTSA (European Fed. of National Organisations Working with the Homeless) filed an official complaint to the European Committee of Social Rights, a subsidiary body of the European Council.

In its collective complaint, where FEANTSA argues that the measures taken by the Republic of Slovenia are not compatible with the international commitments it has ratified, in particular Article 31, 16 and E of the revised European Social Charter.

In February 2009 the Slovenian government replied to the allegations and fully denied to any breach of any article in the European Social Charter. FEANTSA has now till April 10 to comment on Slovenian reply.

All relevant documents are posted on [www.iut.nu/iut\\_council\\_of\\_europe.htm](http://www.iut.nu/iut_council_of_europe.htm)



# Elderly fear homelessness

**The Global Tenants has repeatedly reported on the difficult situation for tenants in Central and Eastern Europe, the CEE region, and about the consequences of massive privatisation and restitution.**

Restitution started in several CEE countries already in 1991, and still after almost eighteen years these processes still linger and gravely affect people's everyday life. Perhaps most seriously hit and vulnerable are the elderly. And they are not getting any younger, nor healthier.

According to IUT's own estimations there are some 2,4 million households affected by restitution in six former socialist countries, among them is Slovakia.

There are many legal cases pending in the courts in the CEE region. Most of these cases are about private owners, or company owners, who are trying one way or another to get rid of tenants. The situation today is that the present tenants in restituted flats have the legal right to stay in their homes, with a somewhat regulated rent. But once they move out, the owner has the full right to let his/her property to anyone, and to market rents. Or convert the flats into offices, or



Rozália Ondrušková.

demolish the building and make way for another new building.

## Without heating for two years

Mrs Rozália Ondrušková is 81 years old, and lives in an old house in Grösslingova Street in the centre of Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia. Since November when her husband died she lives alone. Mrs Ondrušková worked as a taxi driver in Bratislava until 1992 when she retired. Mrs Ondrušková is dressed in several layers of jumpers and socks as her flat is without heating. Two years ago the owner of the house shut off the heat-

ing, hoping that this would force Mrs Ondrušková to move out.

The house was restituted in 1991 by a private person and was later inherited by three daughters. One of these daughters, Mrs Stracová, lives in the same house but she refuses to discuss the matter.

Also, there is no hot water, as the boiler broke several years ago. The only functioning tap for cold water is in the old bathroom.

During my visit I asked about the refrigerator, and why the door was left open. Mrs Ondrušková calmly explained: "What is the use? I use the refrigerator simply as a pantry, as the room is as cold as a functioning refrigerator would have been".

The Tenant Association in Bratislava, Právo na Bývanie (Right to Housing) is currently engaged in assisting Mrs Ondrušková with the re-installing of heating.

## Cutting of gas conduits

Before WW II Bratislava was a very cosmopolitan and mixed city with Slovaks, Hungarians, Germans and Austrians living together. Hilda Tomašovicová is born in Bratislava in 1921. She became a widow already in 1962. Hilda was allocated, by the State, to this flat in Sancova Street over twenty years ago. Her daughter Magda, and granddaughter Hanka, live next-door, just across the staircase, so that they can nurse Hilda who is ill with Alzheimer's Disease and also suffers from multiple sclerosis. Everyone can easily understand that Hilda needs care, 24 hours a day. Nursing homes in Bratislava are mostly private and terribly expensive. Municipal homes are, according to Magda and Hanka, out of the question as the standard is merely of old socialist type, pre 1991 and very poor.

To make a very long and poisoned housing story short – now the owners want to move out Hilda, to one flat, and Magda and her daughter to another flat – not at all close, and with definitely less secure tenure. The owners have now, which is common use by house owners in the CEE region, cut of the gas supplies for heating and cooking.

Text and photo: Magnus Hammar, IUT



Hilda Tomašovicová together with her granddaughter Hanka and daughter Magda.



Opening, in 2008, of the new KFTRA office in Newsome by the Mayor of Kirklees. Standing left of Mayor is Cora Carter, MBE, and Chair of KFTRA.

### **An inspiration to others**

*The IUT has for many years been in regular contact with colleagues in Huddersfield, England, who run KFTRA, Kirklees Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations. Through out the years we have learned that no tenant organisation, small or large, is alike. But being a local grass root organisation, with limited resources but with proven achievements, we asked KFTRA if they could describe their organisation. IUT thinks that KFTRA can serve as an example that can be of inspiration to others.*

### **KFTRA:**

# Run by tenants, for tenants

**KFTRA is based in the county of West Yorkshire in the North of England. It is set in a mixed rural and urban setting with a population of approximately 380,000 people. The local authority is known as Kirklees Council which covers the two main towns of Huddersfield and Dewsbury.**

Originally there were 36,000 council properties in this area, but due to the sale of properties to the residents under

'right to buy' legislation, the number of council owned homes has fallen to under 24,000 properties. Government legislation allowed the sale of council homes to the people who lived in them at a discount on market prices.

KFTRA represent all the people who live on council estates whether they own or rent their homes. The Federation has been supporting and developing the tenants' movement in Kirklees since 1987 as the 'umbrella' organisation for all TRAs (Tenants & Residents Associations) in the Kirklees area, with over 80 individual

groups of tenants being members of the organisation.

### **Independent & effective**

KFTRA is a totally independent organisation, run by a Management Committee of elected Kirklees tenants and residents. The organisation has its own premises and receives an annual support grant, provided by Kirklees Council, mainly from the money raised from tenants rents (Housing Revenue Account.) This grant is used to run the Federation's offices, pay the Management Commit-



tee expenses and employ seven members of staff; a co-ordinator, four fieldworkers and two administrative staff. The day to day running of the organisation is overseen by an Executive Committee of seven people, chosen each year at the KFTRA Annual General Meeting.

The Federation's main aim is to ensure that tenants & residents, who live on council estates in Kirklees, are able to play a full part in the decision making process and have a voice on issues concerning their housing, their environments and their communities.

### Information is vital

KFTRA keep their members and their groups up to date and fully informed on developments in housing policy & procedures, both locally and nationally. They do this by holding workshops and seminars and providing information in our monthly news magazine 'Hometruths' which is posted out to all TRA's and to other people with an interest in the tenant movement.

### Tenants taken into account

KFTRA provide advice, assistance and support to existing groups and encourage the development of new associations in areas that are not currently represented.

The Federation also make sure that individual tenants have a chance to get their views heard through KFTRA's Speak Easy Panel. Currently the panel has over 500 members which opens up opportunities for those tenants who are not part of a formally recognised TRA to



Community Award: Each year KFTRA choose pupils from high schools to receive awards for 'going that extra mile' to make a positive contribution to their community. The awards first began as a way of building bridges between young people from the school and elderly people.

get their opinions heard. Our Federation holds meetings for Delegates and Speak Easy panel members to discuss topical issues. Usually there are five to six of these a year and they are open to everyone involved in the tenant movement.

KFTRA continue to play an important part in leading the tenants' movement in Kirklees. Over the years the organisation have been involved in getting important changes put in place that have ensured that tenants views are taken into account before decisions are made.

KFTRA have obtained places for tenants to have a voice on the councils housing management committee, obtained a

vote for tenants on recruitment panels and obtained money for estate environmental improvements controlled by tenants.

### No to transfer of social housing

When options for the future of council housing were being explored in Kirklees, KFTRA campaigned to make sure that social housing still had the council as the landlord, in which we successfully campaigned for an ALMO (Arms Length Management Organisation) to manage our council housing through a Board of fifteen Directors. Out of fifteen Board members five are tenants and the Chair of the Board is also a tenant.

### Acknowledgement

KFTRA are pleased that through their efforts, Kirklees were one of only four local authorities throughout the country to be awarded Beacon Status, an award scheme that recognises excellence in local government. The award was for the improvement of council services through the involvement of tenants. Since this award KFTRA have been involved in seminars and conferences throughout the country to let other tenant organisations know about the work they do so that they can empower their own tenants.

After twenty years KFTRA is still going from strength to strength and eager to make sure that tenants continue to have their voice heard and that they are involved in making decisions that affect them.

by Graham Simpson, KFTRA Fieldworker



Older visitors to KFTRA's Better Place to Live seminar.

# A new tenant's voice, and a new tenant authority

## National Tenants Voice

The creation of a tenant-run national council to champion tenants' rights is due to be launched in summer 2009. This voice is named National Tenants Voice, NTV. According to the plans, NTV should become an 'independent' non-departmental government body run by tenants and experts, who will lobby for tenant rights and strengthen the tenant movement in England. NTV will also conduct research. The government will contribute with about £1.5 million a year.

The NTV's leadership will be through a 15-person executive management board, together with a national Tenant Council made up of 50 people, of which of 26 tenants chosen from open nominations, 9 representatives from regional tenant groups and 12 from national tenant groups tenants. The remaining 3 seats are reserved for TPAS, Tenant Participation Advisory Service.

Important is that the National Tenants Voice will not be a representative body – existing independent bodies, like tenant associations, will continue to represent tenants. NTV will only help to

build and strengthen that representation. NTV is scheduled to have its first meeting in September.

Source: Inside Housing, Home Truths and Roof magazine

## TSA puts tenants first

The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) was set up late last year as the new regulator for social housing. We have a clear remit from Parliament to put tenants and tenants' interests first in everything we do. We now have new powers to intervene on behalf of tenants. To deliver this we are looking to implement new standards to ensure tenants get the best service and opportunities for involvement.

### Conversation Tour

But first we need to listen to tenants about what they want through these standards. So, earlier this year we have been listening to tenants through our National Conversation – the biggest ever consultation exercise for tenants. We have held regional events with over 3,000 tenants and landlord staff, listened

to tenants through our Conversation Tour – see photo.

We've also sent out many thousands of packs, including a DVD, for tenants to hold their own local conversations – supporting tenants discussing this in their communities with their neighbours. Add in focus groups, questionnaires and the production of several thousand information packs and this is the biggest ever consultation of tenants in England.

### Deliver services most important

The findings have been impressive – tenants rate their landlords when they deliver and stress the importance of not just promising good services but landlords being held to account by their tenants for that delivery. Expect our summary report shortly followed by a second round of consultation with tenants and landlords about our draft standards and how we see tenants making local deals with their landlord. We intend to be implementing these standards across all social housing in England by April 2010, at the latest.

Text: Phil Morgan, Executive Director Tenant Services, Tenant Services Authority  
Photo by TAS



Peter Marsch, CEO of TSA, and tenant Joey Vasquez discuss in front of TSA's roaming pink van, during its National Conversation tour of England.



*continued from page 3*

are unable to sell them. Rents have been pushed down by more than 16 per cent in England, according to the latest figures. Data from the property search engine Globrix reports that the number of new rental homes on the market increased by 57 per cent in the first three months of this year.

#### Japan:

### Increase of homelessness

The Japanese government is considering a \$16 billion aid package to help the unemployed and prevent job cuts. Tens of thousands of workers have been laid off, as the nation faces its worst economic downturn in decades. Japanese enterprises have carried out big personnel cuts since last year. The Japanese government estimates that about 125,000 employees will lose their jobs by the end of March, of which over 90% of are temporary employees. An estimated 5,000 are likely to lose their homes.

In 2007, 5,400 workers were job hunting, staying over night at cyber cafés and other 24-hour shops instead of renting accommodation due to their extremely low wages. Going broke, they were forced to live in the streets. In January there were 15,800 people living in the streets, in parks, etc – this not including “residents” of cyber cafés.

Mass media has been quite sympathetic to the unemployed and this fact might have induced the government to take measures. The government is now letting 13,000 vacant public flats for 6 months, to the unemployed.

Text: Kazuo Takashima, Japanese Tenants Association, Tokyo

Watch the BBC film about homeless people in cyber cafés: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/world\\_news\\_america/7953376.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/world_news_america/7953376.stm)

#### South Africa:

### Selling of public housing

The South African Government at provincial and local municipal levels are selling off all housing stock or providing ownership after renovation and rehabilitation at no cost to the poor tenants.

Government has not built rental accommodation and the private sector's



Ogimashi camp/park with homeless in Osaka.

cost ultimately caters for middle income earners who themselves are now finding it difficult to meet the rental costs.

With middle income earners and immigrant population competing for rental accommodation with the poor, the economic downturn has affected the private rental sector. There was a 16% drop in tenants who could meet their rental commitments in the third quarter of 2008 putting the figure at 54% of those who could meet their rental commitments on time and in full.

South Africa's building cost has doubled from R4000/m<sup>2</sup> to R8000/m<sup>2</sup> (~ 320 Euro / 640 Euro) with rentals therefore increasing from R1200/month (~85 Euro) for a 30 m<sup>2</sup> bachelor flat to R3000/month (~240 Euro) according to Andrew Schaefer, Managing Director of national property agent Trafalgar.

Text: Mohamed Sayed-iqbal OCR, Durban

#### Switzerland:

### Energy saving refurbishment

Interests of mortgages have fallen to a historically low level. They are standing at about 2%. As the rents in Switzerland partly depend on these rates, we expect them lightly to reduce up from the second half of the year. We expect a decreasing construction rate, as well as a smaller demand.

In the long term an increasing inflation will lead to higher interests, and also higher rents in the end.

The federal government has set up a program, with available subsidies to encourage energy saving renovations.

Text: Jacob Trümpy, Schweizerischer Mieterinnen- und Mieterverband, Zürich



CGIL demonstration in Rome against unemployment.

#### Italy:

### New poverty

The effect of the crisis in Italy is very serious, and unemployment is rising rapidly. The economy is in recession and consumption is rapidly declining. Prices on property have decreased by 20 %, 2007 to 2008. Houses for sale over 400,000 Euro have no buyers. New bank loans fell by 45% during the same period.

With the crisis, the demand for rental housing is increasing. With the market to set the rents, they have increased by 140 % between 1998 and 2008. An average flat in Rome rents for 1,500 euro per month, in Milan for 1,400 euro. Tenants who were in difficulties before the crisis are now in an untenable situation. Two thirds of all Italian households who rent have an income of less than 20,000 euro per year. Today, some 650,000 households are queuing for a flat in public houses, and 350,000 households request housing allowances. The Italian government has introduced new “anti-crisis” laws, but no assistance to tenants is yet in sight.

Text: Massimo Petterlin, Sicet Nazionale

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*continued from page 19*

#### **Poland:**

### **Social effects of evictions**

The crisis comes into effect at the same time as thousands of tenants are being evicted from their flats, due to a situation where three-year termination of contracts are enforced. In 2001 a law was implemented allowing the owners to terminate the rent agreement with 3 years of termination period, and many households were given a notice to quit in 2006. Despite this situation and the serious financial crises the Polish government has not yet implemented any new social housing programs. The bank loans, particularly the mortgage loans are very expensive and almost impossible to get because the banks are unwilling to lend money.

Text: Karol Szyłko, PZL, Polish Tenant Association

#### **Slovakia:**

### **State subsidies for renovation**

The Slovak government has reacted to the crisis with two major programs; Firstly, one is assistance to persons who has lost their jobs due to collective redundancies, after 1 January 2009, and therefore are not able to pay their mortgages. The government agreed together with the commercial banks that the banks would try to restructure the debts and set a calendar of payments in favour of the debtor for one year. Secondly, state subsidies for repairs are provided for apartment buildings with substantial defects and for repairs focused on energetic efficiency. The non recurring subsidy can cover 50% of the overall costs.

Also, sitting tenants in denationalised flats are in an increasingly dangerous position, as this group is constantly under the risk at losing their homes – and there are no flats available. See also page 15.

Text: Právo na Bývanie (Right to Housing), Bratislava.

#### **USA:**

### **Some renters are smiling**

Apartment vacancies in the US are rising, particularly in Phoenix, Las Vegas,



Is Bill Clinton's project, homeownership to all Americans, what started the global financial crises?

Atlanta and in most of Florida. Vacancy rates are still low in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, Ore., Cincinnati and New York. Housing experts expect the multifamily vacancy rates will soon be at 8 percent nationwide, higher in some areas. Home sellers who can not sell are renting out their flats and houses instead. This increases the shadow rental market which in some cities makes up to 40 percent of the rental stock.

But even in New York, according to the New York Times, some renters are smiling as some rents, like for studio apartments, have fallen almost 8,5 percent from last year. Also brokers' fees, which can add 15 percent of a year's rent to the initial cost of leasing, are down considerably.

But, there are clouds too. Financing of affordable housing is getting tougher. Nonprofit housing developers who build multifamily rental housing affordable to low and moderate income households need US federal funding from Washington. Under the low income housing tax credit program, the US federal government allocates tax credits to the 50 states, which then distribute them to qualified developers. And funding from Washington is slowing down.

#### **Sweden:**

### **Opportunities for municipal housing**

JM, one of the Nordic region's leading private developers of tenant owned co-ops, for profit, has seen a sharp decline in the sale

of flats. In March, Stockholmshem, one of the three municipal rental housing companies in Stockholm, seized the opportunity and bought 400 flats from JM.

Housing minister Odell expresses the need for new rental housing, in these times of financial crises. Odell hopes to give the National Housing Credit Guarantee Board new tools, which should allow the banks new guarantees for building credits.

On the other hand, at the same time the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, reports that the construction of rental flats is down by 58 percent, an average from the years 2005–2007...

#### **Denmark:**

### **Increase of empty small flats**

In times of crises, young Danes move out from their small flats and go and live with mum and dad.

The website announcing free flats in Denmark, Boligportalen, reported of 600 free small flats in January, all for less than 3000 DKK, or 400 euro, per month.

The financial crisis and insecurity has lead to increased demand for rental flats in Danish public housing flats, almene boliger. In December, 100 000 people were registered for a rental flat, only in Copenhagen. In times of uncertainty very few are willing to invest their money in a flat or a house.

Source: Politiken.dk