



May 2019

◆◆◆ Swedish Union of Tenants in Brussels ◆◆◆ European Responsible Housing Awards- Jury Meeting  
◆◆◆ EESC Hearing on the European Pillar of Social Rights ◆◆◆ Urban Intergroup on Cooperatives ◆◆◆  
CoR opinion on energy poverty” ◆◆◆ Alliance against poverty Baden-Württemberg ◆◆◆ Dutch Green  
Housing Associations in Brussels ◆◆◆ EU commission presents future proposals 2019-2025 ◆◆◆

## Brussels board meeting of the Swedish Union of Tenants

From 13-15<sup>th</sup> of March, the board of the Swedish Union of Tenants, chaired by **President Marie Linder**, visited Brussels to learn more about the social housing in Brussels and the work of IUT in representing the interests of tenants towards the European institutions.

On their first day in Brussels the IUT EU liaison office organized a guided tour in the inner city working-class neighborhood of “**Les Marolles**”. During the tour our guide showed us the transformation of this district from one of the poorest to a popular, increasingly influenced by gentrification.

Despite that, “Les Marolles” remain one the melting pots that represents Brussels capital mix in a typical way- a mixture of many nationalities, ages and income levels in one quarter- with well conserved art nouveau buildings next to – sometimes- run down social housing estates.



The SUT-board with president **Marie Linder** (2<sup>nd</sup> left) and IUT’s SG **Annika Wahlberg** (left)

On day two of the visit, **Sorcha Edwards**, secretary general of Housing Europe, talked about their current work priorities in Brussels: Concentrate EU funding on social housing and energy efficiency by the new “InvestEU”-facility, exchange of knowledge between the members and the landlord’s manifesto for the EU elections.



Social Housing in Les Marolles

IUT's Head of EU office **Barbara Steenbergen** presented the IUT priorities for the European Parliament 2019-2014<sup>1</sup> and some key results of the Action plan of the Housing Partnership of the Urban Agenda<sup>2</sup>. In the lively debate, SUT board members were especially interested in an exchange of knowledge on housing policies in Europe and the alarming trend of the concentration and financialization of housing on European markets, which is currently also a massive problem in Sweden. The SUT board also visited the Swedish Permanent Representation and learned more about the work of the Swedish trade unions in Brussels.

## European Responsible Housing Awards 2019- Jury Meeting in Brussels

The jury of the **European Responsible Housing Awards 2019** gathered March 21st in the Brussels office of the Swedish Trade

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.iut.nu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/IUT-Priorities-for-the-European-Parliament-2019-2024FINAL.pdf>

2

[https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/final\\_action\\_plan\\_euua\\_housing\\_partnership\\_december\\_2018\\_1.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/final_action_plan_euua_housing_partnership_december_2018_1.pdf)

Unions. The jury of the ERHIN Awards counts 6 IUT board members, **Anne Vitaa (Finland)**, **Lenka Tarabova (Czech Republic)**, **Heike Zuhse (Germany)**, **Eddie Jacquemart (France)**, **Paulus Jansen (The Netherlands)** and **Barbara Steenbergen (chair of the jury)**. Fellow jury members come from **URBACT**, the **European Investment Bank**, **Cooperatives International**, the **Norwegian Local and Regional Authorities**, the **Royal Institution for Chartered Surveyors** and **Habitat for Humanity**<sup>3</sup>,



ERHIN jury assessing 86 projects

In an intense day of work the jury analyzed 86 projects in 5 different categories and decided for the 25 finalists and the winners of this edition. Housing providers all over Europe (not restricted to EU member states) submitted their responsible projects for affordable housing and tenant's empowerment and the decision of the finalists was, due to the high quality and number of the applications, not easy. The jury made their decision considering the CSR Code of Conduct<sup>4</sup> and the **main assessment criteria**:

3

---

<https://www.premiosdearquitectura.es/en/awards/39-european-responsible-housing-awards-2019/jury>

<sup>4</sup>[http://www.responsiblehousing.eu/en/upload/ERHIN\\_Outputs/Code%20of%20Conduct\\_EN.pdf](http://www.responsiblehousing.eu/en/upload/ERHIN_Outputs/Code%20of%20Conduct_EN.pdf)

- Stakeholder dialogue and Partnerships
- Awareness-raising and leadership
- Transparency and accountability
- Operational implementation
- Assessment of the shared value created

The Dutch ministry for interior affairs and housing supported the jury by his specialist **Jeroen Hovens**, who developed a decision support tool for contests for natural gas-free quarters in the Netherlands.

The finalists of each category<sup>5</sup> are invited to the awards ceremony that will take place June 6<sup>th</sup> in Lyon as part of the International Social Housing Festival.



The ERHIN-Awards finalists have also been presented in a meeting at the Dutch ministry for interior affairs and housing, 15<sup>th</sup> April by **Jeroen Hovens** and **Barbara Steenbergen** to thank and ensure further support.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.iut.nu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/The-ERHA-announcement-IUT-002.pdf>



**Jeroen Hovens** and **Barbara Steenbergen** in The Hague

## Public Hearing on the European Pillar of Social Rights – evaluation of the initial implementation and recommendations for the future

In November 2017, the EU decided on the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR)<sup>6</sup> as an important tool for promoting upwards convergence, in both economic and social terms. The EESC is now starting to evaluate the implementation of this initiative.

To kick off this process, a **public hearing took place 28 March at the EESC**, to assess the legislative and non-legislative measures taken, identify gaps and propose new measures, including in the context of the European Semester.

**Vladimíra Drbalová**, EESC Study Group President, opened the discussion that was divided in two parts:

1. Implementation of the social pillar to date – reflections from civil society

<sup>6</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en)

2. What next for the implementation of the social pillar?

The stakeholders agreed on the importance of implementing the pillar functions for a Europe more attentive to social aspects. Core question remains the qualitative analysis of data for the social scoreboard, to be considered in the EU semester process. IUT, together with the EU Urban Agenda Partnership for housing, claims for a revision of the EU housing overburden rate definition from currently 40% to 25% of the households disposable income.

## EP Urban Intergroup – more cooperatives needed for a sustainable development of urban areas

The Urban Intergroup organized an event on April 3<sup>rd</sup> at the European Parliament in Brussels to discuss the opportunities of the cooperative movement for a sustainable development of urban areas with examples and ideas from regional perspective.

The President of the Urban Intergroup, **Jan Olbrycht MEP** opening the floor underlined the importance of working together with partners to influence the decisions of the EP.



**Peter Simon MEP**, Vice-president of the Urban Intergroup, introduced the cooperative's mission, then giving the floor to two of the representatives of the cooperative model in Europe: **Anja Roth** (Cooperative organization of Baden-Württemberg) and **Agnès Mathis** (Director of the Cooperatives Europe).

For both the cooperative model is a successful business model of people helping themselves and where the focus is on the members. MEPs pointed out that for the development of urban areas the cooperative model is crucial in various sectors as especially housing, but also for local energy supply.

## CoR opinion on energy poverty

The rapporteur of the opinion of the multilevel governance and cross-sectoral cooperation to fight energy poverty, Ms. **Kata Tüttő** from Budapest (PES group), presented her work in a hearing at the Committee of the Regions (CoR) April 4.<sup>7</sup>

She took the example of her country: in Hungary, the poor can only afford to buy wood to keep their homes warm. The rapporteur pointed out that we have numerous definitions of "energy poverty". According to estimations of the EU commission, 50 million Europeans cannot afford a decent warming and live in unhealthy environments. Local municipalities should help with more data and the European Commission has the duty of investigate. The recently set up "EU Energy Poverty Observatory" will do this work. The IUT is involved in the work of CoR and contributed also to workshop on territorial impact

<sup>7</sup> <https://pes.cor.europa.eu/multilevel-governance-and-cross-sectoral-cooperation-fight-energy-poverty>



assessment to the theme May 2<sup>nd</sup>. The responsible commission of the CoR accepted the majority of the rapporteur's amendments, the final plenary debate is scheduled in June.

## Dutch “Green Housing Associations” in Brussels

March 19<sup>th</sup>, a delegation of CEOs of Dutch housing associations including the director of AEDES, a representative from the Dutch ministry of interior affairs and housing and **Paulus Jansen**, Director of the Nederlandse Woonbond, visited Brussels. IUT’s **Barbara Steenbergen** was invited to present the IUT priorities and report about the implication of EU policies on housing.<sup>8</sup>

## DMB/IUT meeting with EU-Commissioner Oettinger: providing affordable housing is a social policy imperative

According to calculations of a high level EU-working group, there is an EU-wide investment gap of 57 billion euros per year for social housing. However, the target group definition of social housing by the EU Commission to only disadvantaged groups hampers investment considerably. Investors doubt whether they may have to pay back subsidies because they have built also for middle-income households. Even federal states in Germany are unsure if they risk a competition complaint. But the social mix in residential areas is an important and recognized goal of social and affordable housing construction. That is why the board

<sup>8</sup> <https://groenehuisvesters.nl/nieuws/groene-huisvesters-naar-brussel/>

member of Deutscher Mieterbund and IUT, **Rolf Gaßmann** and IUT’s **Barbara Steenbergen**, had a discourse with EU-Commissioner **Günther Oettinger** in Brussels about the need to have affordable housing for broad parts of the society, March 18<sup>th</sup>.



**Gaßmann** and **Steenbergen** handing over the IUT tenant’s priorities to Günther Oettinger, Vice president of the EU-Commission.

**Oettinger** shared the opinion of tenants’ representatives that affordable housing requires financial support for broad parts of the society and that this can also create balanced residential areas with a good social mix. **Oettinger** said he would attend an event on the question organized by the EU commission and IUT in September 2019. Investment barriers for affordable housing have to be eliminated. He will also invite the EU-Commissioners in charge of competition and social affairs as well as representatives of cities and housing associations.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup>

<https://www.facebook.com/DMBmieterbund/photos/a.609650492385582/2554634924553786/?type=3&theater>

## Alliance against Poverty among the Elderly invites DMB and IUT to Stuttgart

April 2<sup>nd</sup>, **Rolf Gaßmann**, Deutscher Mieterbund and IUT board member, and **Barbara Steenbergen** were speaking at the conference of the “Alliance against Poverty” in Stuttgart.<sup>10</sup>

The alliance has a broad societal basis: the trade unions, the welfare associations, the churches, the organisations of the elderly, the organisations of women, environmental associations and many more. In his key-note speech, **Rolf Gaßmann**, DMB and IUT board member, presented alarming facts about the housing situation. The deficit of housing units rose between 2011 and 2015 to 88.000 units. In the years 2017-2018 only 30.000 units were built p.a., which increases the shortage of housing to 180.000 units. The situation is tense- not only in the big cities, but all over Baden-Württemberg. Some cities, like Freiburg, impose quota of 50% social housing in new developments. But this is not enough. DMB claims for the establishment of a new housing association owned by the Land Baden-Württemberg to solve the immense shortage. Housing costs are the main factor of becoming poor-and especially elderly people suffer from the exploding rents, mostly driven by modernization and renovations and high rent prices in new contracts, not stopped by the basically toothless legal rent price brake regulation. After the rent payment, for many tenant households remains less than the lowest social welfare rate. The housing conditions do not only mirror the societal imbalance, but massively increase the risk of poverty in one of the richest Länder of Germany. The EU perspective of funding for

---

<sup>10</sup> <http://buendnis-gegen-altersarmut.de/Veranstaltungen/>

housing and state aid regulations was explained by **Barbara Steenbergen** and discussed with the 80 participants afterwards on thematic tables. **Karin Zauner-Lohmeier** from Wiener Wohnen referred to the not- for profit model of the Vienna housing association and introduced the new European citizens initiative “Housing for all”<sup>11</sup>, which was signed by many conference participants on the spot.



EP candidate **Dieter Heidtmann**, **Barbara Steenbergen**, **Karin-Zauner Lohmeier** and **Rolf Gaßmann**

## Board meeting of Nederlandse Woonbond on European Issues

April 16<sup>th</sup>, the board of the Dutch Union of Tenants invited **IUT Vice-President Jan Laurier** and **Barbara Steenbergen** to discuss the EU Urban Agenda Housing Action Plan, the European Citizens Initiative “Housing for all” and the future working priorities for the IUT in Europe. Woonbond Chairman **Ton Selten** and his board colleagues underlined the need to go beyond national interests, for a strong international tenants movement based on solidarity and targeted interest representation.

---

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.housingforall.eu/>



Headquarter of Woonbond in the heart of Amsterdam

## Future of Europe: 5 priority areas proposed by the European Commission

On 9th May, the Heads of State and Governments will hold an informal meeting in Sibiu, Romania. The Sibiu Summit is the culmination of a process of reflection on the future of the European Union in 2025, which began in 2017. As a contribution to the forthcoming discussions, on April 30th the European Commission presented its 5 priorities for action: a protective Europe, a competitive Europe, a fair Europe, a sustainable Europe and an influential Europe.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/euco\\_sibiu\\_communication\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/euco_sibiu_communication_en.pdf)

These priorities are based on several observations, including: the high level of quality of life in Europe; the long-term ageing of the population; the increasing digitalisation of economies; the need to accelerate the energy transition to meet the commitments of the Paris agreement and the defence of multilateralism at international level.

At the June European Council, the EU Member States will adopt their strategic agenda for 2020-2024, drawing on the work from the Sibiu Summit. This agenda is intended to inspire the five-year work programme for the next European Commission, which will take over in November 2019.

Housing is mentioned twice in the paper: ***“Access to social and affordable, energy efficient housing is a challenge. Around 10% of households in the EU spend over 40% of their income on housing”*** (page 24) and, under the section “Fair Europe” referring to the EU pillar of social rights: ***“We need support access to quality, energy efficient affordable housing for all in Europe, supporting member states to ensure functioning housing markets and adequate provision of social housing”*** (page 33).

The First Vice President of the EU-Commission, **Frans Timmermans**, at the same time “Spitzenkandidat” for the PES as successor of **Jean-Claude Juncker**, recently made a concrete proposal: In an interview in a German newspaper he claimed for direct funding of municipalities from the EU structural funds, if they impose quota of 30% social housing in new developments, without making the financial detour via the Member States<sup>13</sup> - a clear demand of the EU Urban Agenda Partnership for Housing.

---

<sup>13</sup> <https://rp-online.de/politik/eu/interview-mit-spe-spitzenkandidat-frans-timmermans-aid-38442637>

**IUT President Sven Bergenstråhle** is invited by the PES to discuss the next steps in this important dossier for the future.

\*\*\*

We hope you enjoy the reading- and please vote for the new European Parliament 2019-2024!

Watch the European Elections 2019 campaign video here:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/eu-affairs/20190415STO40361/choose-your-future-video>

## European elections 23 - 26 May 2019



This time it's not enough to hope for a better future. This time we all need to take responsibility for it. So this time we are not just asking you to vote. We are asking you to persuade others to vote too.

[thistimeinvoting.eu](http://thistimeinvoting.eu)



@ IUT Brussels

Barbara Steenbergen

Head of the IUT EU liaison Office

[barbara.steenbergen@iut.nu](mailto:barbara.steenbergen@iut.nu)