

October 2019

IUT World Conference Vienna ♦♦♦ Celebration of World Habitat Day and International Tenants Day ♦♦♦ CoR on Collaborative Economy ♦♦♦ EU cities and regions week: Who owns our cities? ♦♦♦ Report: The 2019 State of Housing in EU ♦♦♦ Farewell greetings to François Zutter ♦♦♦

IUT World Conference Vienna



The IUT Board at the Vienna City Hall, with the new IUT President **Marie Linder** in the centre

The theme of the 21st IUT World Conference October 3-4 was the 2030 Agenda, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities¹.

The set up of the conference was as much interactive as possible, with the purpose to create a realtime reflection on the issues of housing from an international point of view, streamed live on the web. A big thank you to our generous hosts from the **Austrian Tenant's Union, Marisa Perchtold and the entire MVÖ team!**

The sessions included roundtables where participants could hear about best practice and exchange knowledge in many topical subjects, like strategies against sky-rocketing rents, short term rental platforms, political campaigning, recruiting and organising tenants as well as social agreements between tenants and landlords.²

On 2 October, 2019 at IUT's board meeting in Vienna, **Marie Linder from the Swedish Union of Tenants was elected as the new IUT President.**



Marie Linder, President of IUT and SUT

Rolf Gaßmann (Germany) was appointed as Vice President and **Jan Laurier** (Netherlands) was re-elected as Vice President.

At the first day of the World Conference, **Marie Linder** addressed the audience of tenant's representatives from all over the world and underlined the need to campaign

¹<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/>

²<https://www.iut.nu/events/iut-world-conference/>

and cooperate together- a strong tenant representation all over the world!



Barbara Steenbergen, Head of IUT Liaison Office

Barbara Steenbergen's speech was based on the recent developments at EU level, and the importance of making the tenant's voice heard by all the European tenant unions working together.

"When you are an International Union, the basis of all your work can only be solidarity. And solidarity in two ways: the weaker countries together with the stronger. And solidarity between of all of us. We need to present solutions like the European Responsible Housing Initiative, not only criticism. Every nation has his special system on housing policy but we are here in IUT to work all together and to speak with one voice".

During the second day of the conference, IUT Brussels was involved in different roundtables, e.g. in the roundtable held by **Martin Hofverberg** from SUT ³ on the theme of "short term rental platforms".

³ <https://www.iut.nu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Martin-Hofverberg-Short-term-rental-platforms.pdf>



Ilaria D'Auria, policy officer of IUT liaison Office, talks about Milan housing situation

Ilaria D'Auria highlighted the difficult situation of the city of Milan⁴, which becomes more and more a city exclusively for rich people and where the no regulation and no access to data of those platforms make the situation even more complicated.

"Sonnwendviertel": the new Social Housing in Vienna

In the afternoon of October 4, the participants of the IUT World Conference went to some site visits of social housing in the city of Vienna.

The choice was between **old social housing in Vienna** with a visit to the Municipal housing along the Gürtel, the "Karl-Marx-Hof" and the exhibition "Das rote Wien"; and **new social housing in Vienna**, in the Sonnwendviertel. The new district of Sonnwendviertel is a unique model in Europe⁵.

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<https://www.arcipelagomilano.org/archives/53734?fbclid=IwAR0lIFVS0MgZkSSB83MxTGB0D8GuGZYzuQzHQVH0-ISdfmiWdOJDqmU2dFo>

⁵ https://www.wohnfonds.wien.at/media/file/english/Broschure_Sonnwendviertel_2018_englisch_web.pdf



Visit to "Sonnwendviertel": the new Social Housing in Vienna

Since 2009, Wohnfonds Wien has held three developers' competitions in Sonnwendviertel (Sonnwendviertel I in 2009, Sonnwendviertel II – SMART living in 2012, and Sonnwendviertel III – generations: living in 2016) with around 1,650 subsidised apartments. Three co-housing group projects with 65 home units were appraised by the Land Advisory Board in the past few years, and Wohnfonds Wien started a block renewal initiative bordering directly to the new development district in order to promote revitalisation of the existing buildings. Another approximate 700 apartments were realized by the housing initiative that was launched by the City of Vienna in 2011 in parallel to subsidised housing. This is an additional measure through which new residential space will be provided. Through low-cost loans from the City of Vienna, the apartments offer favourable conditions for the tenants for a time period of at least ten years that are similar to subsidised housing. If you add the subsidised apartments together with those of the housing initiative, there are a total of 2,000 new affordable apartments in the Sonnwendviertel.



Modern architecture, balconies and green spaces

Celebration of World Habitat Day and International Tenants' Day in Brussels



Celebration of World Habitat Day and International Tenants' day, with the delegation from the Western Balkans and the Freja Forum

The United Nations have designated the first Monday of October as World Habitat Day- and the IUT celebrates its own International Tenant's Day. The purpose of World Habitat Day is to reflect on the state of our towns and cities and on the basic right of all to adequate housing. To celebrate this day in Brussels, IUT Brussels together with SUT, UN Habitat, KAGIDER, HOLICOB and Freja Foundation have organized a meeting in the Kagider Office on the 7th of October to reflect together on the housing situation with a particular focus on the situation of the Western Balkans.

The opening in the morning was up to **Paulius Kulikauskas**, the Chief of the Office for Europe and European Institutions of UN Habitat giving a brief introduction of the UN Habitat SDG goals for cities and their residents.

Ilaria D'Auria and **Barbara Steenbergen** explained the role of IUT Brussels in defending tenant's rights at EU level and the fundamental right of everyone to affordable, adequate and healthy housing. A group of young activists from the Western Balkans, active in the Freja Forum and the HOLICOB project reported on the difficult housing situation especially for young people in their countries, being forced to live with their parents because a lack of affordable housing options.

As conclusion of the morning, **Johan Pelling** of the Swedish Union of Tenants from the region Aros-Gävle explained the role and the work of SUT at local and international level.



From the right: **Mustafa Dzihic** (CENSOR), **Evin Incir** (MEP), **Barbara Jesus-Gimeno** (Deputy Head of Unit for Montenegro) and **Barbara Steenbergen** (IUT).

The meeting was followed by a roundtable debate in the European Parliament. The focus was on young people's living conditions in the Western Balkans.

The panel of the discussion was very rich and the situation was analysed from different point of views: the institutional thanks to the contributions of **Evin Incir**, MEP of the Social and Democrats group and **Barbara Jesus-Gimeno**, Deputy Head of Unit for Montenegro of the European Commission; and the civil society point of view, especially for the contribution of **Mustafa Dzihic** of CENSOR,

who presented the project HOLICOB of Bosnia and Hercegovina.

Mustafa Dzihic presented the situation of B&H for young people with a special focus on the housing situation. In B&H there are three kind of housing models:

1. Rental Housing
2. Owner-occupied housing
3. Social housing

For all the three the most important problem is the lack of data, not allowing a proper planning and housing policy. Regarding the rental housing it is due to the fact that the landlords avoid signing lease contracts and registering them in order to avoid tax payment- a huge grey and black market. The majority of the population is aiming to buy a home as they consider it as the only option. Laws on social housing and tenants' protection do not exist and HOLICOB is actively participating in trying to adopt such laws.

The project HOLICOB aims is to contribute to long term strategic work for housing and living conditions for people in B&H, to give new perspectives by using competences of civil society, to give strong input to the debate and to involve young people to be active.

TV Documentary on the financialisation of housing on International Tenants Day 2019

Germany, due to a law allowing easy tax evasion and money laundering in the real estate sector, is since decades in the center of interest of profit oriented international investors. In a documentary broadcasted on the occasion of International Tenants Day October 7, a German TV channel followed the story of tenants in three estates facing the threat of sky rocketing rent increases (from 7 to 19 Euro/m²), transformation of their rental

homes into condominiums, displacement and trading of their homes by a construct of firms and subfirms between Luxemburg and the Cayman Islands, not knowing who and where their landlord is.



The process of speculation and ripping off of residents- some living in their flats for more than 50 years - was shown by examples of Stuttgart, Freiburg and Berlin- with IUT Vice-President and chairman of DMB-Stuttgart **Rolf Gaßmann**, chairman of DMB-Freiburg **Manfred Wolf** and **Barbara Steenbergen**, IUT Head of EU liaison office. The tenant representatives underlined the need to have stronger rent caps, more tenant protection in case of speculation and renovations and a comprehensive transparency register for property deals.

The documentary, broadcasted on German TV prime time, was watched by 2,72 Mio. people. <https://www.daserste.de/information/reportage-dokumentation/dokus/videos/wohnen-mieten-abzocken-video-106.html>

Workshop on the Collaborative Economy at the Vienna House



The collaborative economy has a huge impact on the local and regional level in Europe. Globally operating online platforms like Airbnb and Uber cause new challenges at very

short notice. The legal framework on the EU-level is outdated. The Committee of the Regions is preparing an opinion on "The European Framework for regulatory responses to the collaborative economy". This may come timely as the newly elected President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen has announced a new Digital Services Act in the Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2019 – 2024. The focus of the discussion of the rapporteur was on the necessity to regulate the European market and for doing so he stressed the importance of having access to data.

CoR Rapporteur **Peter Florianschütz (AT/PES)**, Member of the Vienna State Parliament and member of the City Council of Vienna, said: "Platforms are transforming our cities, from Airbnb to Uber. We need a European regulatory framework to make sure the sharing economy does not affect negatively our citizens. In particular, affordable housing has become a key concern, as short-term lettings via Airbnb and other platforms are driving up rents in many cities in Europe. The new European framework should strengthen the role of local authorities in regulating the collaborative economy, according to the local situation, and helping them ensure cities remain liveable for all people." ⁶ The report is to be voted in the plenary session December 4-5.

Human rights and environmental diligence: the way forward for responsible business

On the 24th of September 2019 at the Permanent Representation of Austria to the EU the event on "Human rights and environmental diligence: the way forward for

⁶ <https://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/local-and-regional-leaders-streamline-views-on-the-collaborative-economy.aspx>

responsible business” took place, organized by AK EUROPA, the Brussels Office of the Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour, ÖGB Europabüro, the Brussels Office of the Austrian Trade Union Federation, the European Coalition for Corporate Justice (ECCJ) and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC).



From the right **Thomas Wagnsonner (EESC)**, **Heidi Hautala (MEP)**, **Sarah Bruckner** (Austrian Chamber of Labour), **Juliette Renaud** (Friends of the Earth France) and **Maija Laurila** (European Commission).

Sarah Bruckner from the Austrian Chamber of Labour moderated the discussion of a real rich panel with two keynotes speeches of **Claudia Saller**, from the European Coalition for Corporate Justice and **Isabelle Schömann**, ETUC Confederal Secretary.

In the panel discussion with three members of the European institutions, **Heidi Hautala**, Member to the European Parliament, **Maija Laurila**, European Commission and **Thomas Wagnsonner**, European Economic and Social Committee; and also the expert **Juliette Renaud**, Friends of the Earth France debated the fact that multinational corporations have grown as powerful as nation states. Yet, in traditional international law, corporations only have rights but no obligations and they are subject only to the domestic laws of the different states.

Human rights are meant to be universal. Human rights due diligence (HRDD) is a way

for enterprises to proactively manage potential and actual adverse human rights impacts with which they are involved. Because prevention is better than cure as said in the introduction of the meeting **Isabelle Schömann** and she stressed the importance of the duty of care.

The EU has adopted HRDD sector-specific legislation but a legislative proposal with a border scope and a cross-sectoral approach on the European level is still overdue.

To get a picture of the European situation about the HRDD legislation the moderator prepared a document named “Business and human rights”⁷ with a special focus on France and The Netherlands.

The State of the European Union 2019

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THE STATE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Parliament faces its most important elections yet



2019

The political situation in Europe is one of the most difficult and complex it has experienced since the Treaty of Rome. The difficulties stem from the domestic policies of the member states and from their inward-moving attitude in the face of the global challenges of the 21st

⁷ https://www.akeuropa.eu/sites/default/files/2019-10/5_Policy%20Brief%20Business%20and%20Human%20Rights.pdf

century - on security, on socioeconomic relations, or on the environment.

This **8th edition of the report on the State of the EU**⁸ aims to contribute to that reflection: On what areas should the reform focus? How can the EU recover its capacity for political design? How can we stop the shift to the right currently taking place in Europe?

The report came out of the collaboration between **Fundación Alternativas** and the **Friedrich Ebert Stiftung**. This year's report is inevitably marked by the elections to the European Parliament and the subsequent start of the new legislature, which is bound to be a crucial one in the trajectory of the European project.

On September 25, the 8th edition of the report of the European Union was presented at the European Parliament by two of the authors: **Maria Pallares** and **Diego López Garrido**.

Maria Pallares said during the presentation that this new report should be a milestone and a instrument of policy maker, as Europe, right now, needs more progressive policy.

In the chapter "Social Europe – naming the myth, preserving the model and taking concrete action" together with **Gero Maass**, they explain to the new European Parliament the importance of a most progressive European society.

The 2019 State of Housing in the EU



The Housing Europe Observatory, the research branch of Housing Europe celebrates its 25th anniversary this year by presenting the latest edition of its flagship report. 'The State of Housing in the EU'⁹.

The 2017 edition¹⁰ had made the case that Europe's housing challenge is far from over, providing a detailed update of the latest policy development, key facts and figures as well as the housing profiles of all EU Member States. This year's edition launched October 1st focuses also on a number of overarching themes, including the importance of local partnerships for the provision of social housing.

The opening of the evening was held by **Cédric Van Styvendael**, President of Housing Europe who underlined the need of changing the housing situation in Europe and how this new report could deliver useful material. He remarked some critical points as the fact that the "lack of affordable housing continues in the decision making" and the problem of the privatization of the sector.

"We need investment in social housing to reduce inequality and also we have to regulate the price of the land and of the real estate".

Alice Pittini, the Housing Europe Research

⁸<http://luaediciones.com/InformeUE2019/english/>

⁹<file:///C:/Users/ilari/Downloads/Publication%202019%20for%20WEB.pdf>

¹⁰file:///C:/Users/ilari/Downloads/FULL%20Publication%202017_web.pdf

Director introduced the report. First of all, the trends in housing affordability in Europe and the changes in governance. Then a picture of the investment in affordable housing, the changes in housing delivery with a focus on the evolving role for social and affordable housing providers and the changes in EU landscape. The analysis covers 22 countries in Europe¹¹.



From the right: Julie Lawson (RMIT University), **Elisabetta Gualmini** (MEP), **Katarina Ivanković Knežević** (European Commission), **Patricia Couti** (EUROCITIES), **Alice Pittini** (Housing Europe), **Laurent Ghekière** (Housing Europe).

Elisabetta Gualmini, member of the EP committee on budgets and employment and social affairs, stressed the so called “paradox of housing”: “Housing is growing in silence. It is a hot topic, both at National and European level. But on the other side policy makers are not able to respond in a united and a systematic way and housing is fragmented. We need to think on how rebuilt the idea of housing and we need to invest more in social housing.”

Nicolas Schmit, commissioner designate for employment and social affairs

¹¹ <http://www.housingeurope.eu/resource-1323/the-state-of-housing-in-the-eu-2019>

In the hearing of commissioner designate **Nicolas Schmit**, a member of the Luxembourg Socialist Workers' Party (LSAP), and former member of the government of Luxembourg from 2004 until 2019, the EU target group for social housing was debated.¹² Questioned *“What are the specific legislative and non-legislative initiatives which you intend to propose in the area you are responsible for and in particular to ensure that Member States have sufficient flexibility in defining target groups for access to social housing”, he answered:*



Commissioner designate **Nicolas Schmit**

“I am convinced that housing plays a crucial role in enhancing social inclusion and cohesion. Investment in sustainable housing will be at the core of the green transition. All those who lack sufficient resources should receive social and housing assistance, as laid down in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The Charter is very clear: in order to combat social exclusion and poverty, the Union recognises and respects the right to social and housing assistance so as to ensure a decent existence for all those who lack sufficient resources, in accordance with

¹²

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/plmrep/COMMITTEES/EMPL/DV/2019/10-01/Nicolas_Schmit_Answers_to_written_questions_EN.pdf

the rules laid down by Union law and national laws and practices. Principle 19 of the Pillar of Social Rights also states that access to social housing and housing assistance should be provided to those in need. I stand behind these fundamental principles. I believe that the housing situation in the Member States should continue to be monitored in the European Semester and that, on the basis of the assessment of the Social Scoreboard, where relevant, country-specific recommendations should be carefully tailor-made on specific conditions existing in the different Member States. I am keen to discuss with the European Parliament on the way forward for EU support to Member States, within the limits of Union competences and in line with the principle of subsidiarity.”

International conference at Berlins’ Nettelbeckplatz- winner of the ERHIN awards

Energy efficient renovations in the built sector are key to reducing energy consumption in the coming years. This is because around 80% of the global building stock of 2050 has already been constructed and many of these buildings have a very poor energy performance. Solutions are needed, taking into account the preferences of tenants and the building owners’ financial capacity.



New PV roof installation

Nettelbeckplatz, ERHIN award winner 2019 of the Berlin cooperative 1892 e. G. hosted a two days meeting of researchers, large social housing companies of UK, Sweden and Italy to show that renovating at a larger scale opens the opportunity for a better integration of renewable energy and is generally more cost effective. Projects demonstrate a multi-building and single owner renovation approach that can achieve a 75% reduction of total energy demand, focussed on the social and public housing stock (12% of EU building stock.) IUT Brussels head of office **Barbara Steenbergen** was asked to contribute to the meeting and to debate legal and political constraints in achieving affordable renovation for the residents. After the political part of the conference, the participants visited the building site of Nettelbeckplatz. Residents like Renate and Ingo Reichert, also present at the ERHIN awards in Lyon, showed what renovation actually means for the residents and debated costs, problems and finally- good solutions for both parties- tenants and landlords.



Meeting again the tenant representatives
Renate and Ingo Reichert (r.)

Housing, land and property rights in Arab countries: Ensuring social housing is a critical and complex part

As violent conflicts have hit various Arab countries like Syria, Libya and Iraq, the region has become a focus for discussions on displacement and its effects on housing, land and property (HLP) rights. The future of HLP rights in these countries is linked to the kind of state emerging from a post-war political settlement. The struggle over socially just HLP rights involves refugees and displaced person, local civil society organisations, occupants of empty dwellings, war profiteers, foreign powers, external aid agencies and international organisations. The destruction of civilian homes and shelters in conflict areas has devastating long-term consequences far beyond the end of the violence itself, and often impacts the already vulnerable the most. A new report by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung¹³ examines the issue through recent cases in the Middle East and North Africa.

The wars in Syria, Iraq and Libya have displaced millions, both internally and across

¹³ <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/tunesien/15664.pdf>

borders. Many of those displaced, especially from Syrian urban areas, lived in informal or self-built housing and often do not have reliable legal proof of ownership. The study was presented in Brussels on 19 September to various stakeholders by **Thomas Claes**, the director of the regional project Economic Policies for Social Justice at FES in the Middle East and North Africa and the authors of the study, **Nour Harastani** and **Edwar Hanna**. A successful and just settlement of HLP issues can contribute to a sustainable peace. In his chapter on Iraq and Libya, **Javier Gonzalez** discusses how population displacement and violations of housing, land and property rights have been used as a weapon to reassert control of the area and to impose lasting control by the regime. To ensure the provision of affordable rental and social housing is the most complex and critical part- an entire set of legislation

Who owns our city? The financialisation of housing

Many European cities are in high demand because of what they have to offer in terms of jobs, culture, and education. The popularity of these cities has also attracted international investors who seek to establish high-end property portfolios.



EU week of the cities and the regions- session on housing financialisation

With urban property being a finite resource, this has arguably led to spiraling-up property and rental prices, causing a decrease in affordable housing stock. In the workshop during the EU week for the cities and regions, several EU city studies (Amsterdam, Athens, Berlin, Barcelona and Paris) whereby the financialisation of the housing market over the past few years has been analysed were presented by the Joint Research Center of the European Commission, **Sjoerdje van Heerden** and her colleagues.¹⁴



Time flies- 14 years at the IUT board- first board meeting of **François Zutter** (background on top) 2005 in Amsterdam

Board meeting in Vienna: Farewell to François Zutter, ASLOCA Geneva, Swiss Union of Tenants

The team of IUT Brussels sends best wishes to our colleague **François Zutter** who will retire.



The new President of IUT, **Marie Linder**, handing over a gift to **François Zutter**.

François Zutter, chief lawyer at the Association Droits Locataires Suisse Romande in Geneva, passionate chess player and jazz connoisseur, started in 2005 as member of the IUT board.

Thank you for doing a great job at the board of IUT and for your strong commitment for the cause of the tenants.

Thank you especially for your quick-wittedness and humour, always bringing a smile to our board meetings.

We will miss you and wish you musically, relaxed and happy days in your retirement!

Ilaria D'Auria and Barbara Steenbergen

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¹⁴ https://europa.eu/regions-and-cities/programme/sessions/534_en