



**December 2019**

◆◆◆ EESC hearing on Social Housing ◆◆◆ Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation and Goethe Institute invite IUT members to international housing conference in Lisbon ◆◆◆ Integrating the European Pillar of Social Rights and the SDGs in the European Semester ◆◆◆ EU Charter of Fundamental Rights 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary ◆◆◆ 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Bonn Tenants' Association ◆◆◆ Happy retirement Elena Szolgayová ◆◆◆ Happy Birthday Jan Laurier ◆◆◆

## Hearing on social housing: as a service of general economic interest: EESC calls for more robust EU housing policies



*housing. Given the housing crisis that Europe is currently experiencing, urgent measures are needed. The real danger of excessive housing costs no longer affects the most disadvantaged only, but also an ever-growing part of the rest of the population.<sup>1</sup>*

This is the Leitmotiv of a multi-stakeholder hearing in the European Economic and Social Committee December 4, organized by EESC member **Raymond Hencks** from Luxembourg, where IUT was invited to speak. The morning panel was dedicated to analyse the current housing situation, from the part of the landlords, the developers, the tenants, the EU partnership for affordable housing, the European Investment Bank, and the United Nations. IUT concentrated on the Housing overburden for tenants, and the financialization of housing markets.

In the afternoon, the various directorate generals of the European Commission dealing with housing issues, DG competition, DG employment and social affairs and DG

*“The European Union needs to speak with one voice and act accordingly in the field of social*

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/news-media/press-releases/we-need-eu-strategy-social-and-affordable-housing-says-eesc>

economics and finances contributed to the debate<sup>2</sup>.

The meeting was attended by 80 stakeholders who had the possibility to debate with all speakers. The IUT board was represented by **IUT and SUT president Marie Linder, Johan Mirtorp** from SUT and **Anne Lucet-Dallongeville**, chair of the international department of Confédération Nationale du Logement (CNL).

Several members of the EESC, **Krzysztof Stanislaw BALON** (Poland), **Maria NIKOLOPOULOU** (Spain), **Martin MAYER** (UK), and **Jorge PEGADO LIZ** (Portugal) joined the debate: *"Given that the danger of excessive housing costs no longer affects only the most disadvantaged, but an ever-growing part of the population, the purpose of housing policy must not be restricted to assisting vulnerable individuals. It must also promote the supply of **affordable homes for all**, ensure that housing matches family needs, promote high-quality, energy-efficient housing, a social mix within buildings and urban areas, and tackle segregation."*

According to the 19th principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights, "access to social housing or housing assistance of good quality shall be provided for those in need". As a service of general economic interest, social housing is intended for households who can no longer afford decent accommodation on the traditional property market because, once housing costs have been deducted, their available income is not enough to meet their other basic needs. The ability to exercise the right to housing depends on sufficient availability at affordable prices.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/social-housing-service-general-interest-guarantee-decent-energy-efficient-and-affordable-accommodation-all/presentations>



The president of the TEN- section (transport, energy, infrastructure) of the EESC, **Pierre-Jean Coulon** (France) announced a follow-up meeting in March 2020. He, together with the report initiator **Raymond Hencks (Luxembourg)**, will now have to find majorities in order to have a full initiative report of the EESC.

In line with the subsidiarity principle, at European level housing policies are increasingly mainstreamed into other European strategies. They fall within the scope of certain provisions of the Treaty, including those regarding the Union's shared values and the European Pillar of Social Rights, and are linked to further fundamental rights such as human dignity and treatment.



**Pierre-Jean Coulon**, President of the EESC Section for TEN, and **Raymond Hencks**, President of the EESC Temporary Study Group on Services of General Interest

During the opening of the hearing, **Pierre-Jean Coulon**, President of the EESC section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society (TEN), underlined that the energy transition could only be successful if the social dimension of housing was reaffirmed. There is no fight against climate change without the social dimension of housing. Better social housing is the guarantee of success in taking climate action: quality housing means a better life for citizens and this will bring about a successful climate transition, he stated.

Underlining his words, **Raymond Hencks**, President of the EESC Temporary Study Group on Services of General Interest, pointed to the challenge of definitively including these issues on the political agenda of the new European Commission in order to resolve the housing crisis that has continued to grow since 2008. *“The right to housing is an international obligation of the Member States which the EU is bound to respect and is stated in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and in the Lisbon Treaty. It is the responsibility of the Union and the Member States to respect access to services of general economic interest, including the right to housing”*, he said.

**Barbara Steenbergen** focused her speech<sup>3</sup> on the so called **“housing costs overburden rate”**: the percentage of the population living in a household where total housing costs represent more than 40% of the total disposable household income (net of housing allowances). Using the recent data from Eurostat, the head of the IUT Liaison office stressed that in Europe the proportion of the population whose housing costs exceeded 40 % of income was **highest for tenants with market price rents** (27.4 %), but reasonably

**lower for persons in owner-occupied dwellings with a loan or mortgage** (4.4 %).

Then she gave an overview of the situation of the cities where the situation of citizens’ rights to affordable housing are being jeopardised following the growing influence of profit oriented investors and unleashed speculation on urban property markets.

In conclusion, she presented the findings of the Action Plan of the EU Urban Agenda Housing Partnership<sup>4</sup> recommending that the reference threshold of total housing costs should not be higher than 25% of the disposable income of a household, when calculating the housing overburden rate. In particular she referred to *“Action 12” recommendations on good policies, governance and practices*, like rent stabilisation and control, prevention of “renovictions” and security of tenure.

## Introducing the new European Commissioners



President of the European Commission **Ursula von der Leyen** (EPP, Germany)

On 27 November 2019, during the plenary session in Strasbourg, a large majority of members of the European Parliament voted in favour of the new **Ursula von der Leyen** Commission. Ahead of the vote, the President-elect presented her team of

<sup>3</sup>[https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/barbara\\_steenbergen.pdf](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/barbara_steenbergen.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>[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)

Commissioners to the European Parliament. In her speech during the EP plenary session<sup>5</sup> she reaffirmed her strong commitment to working closely with the EP on defining issues like fighting climate change, harnessing digitalisation and building a social market economy for today's world.

These EU-Commissioners will be in charge of the portfolios most relevant for housing, climate neutrality and energy renovation as part of the new "European Green Deal":

**Frans Timmermans (S&D, The Netherlands)**



**Portfolio: Executive Vice-President for European Green Deal & Climate Action**

**Nicolas Schmit (S&D, Luxembourg)**



**Portfolio: Jobs and Social Rights**

**Elisa Ferreira (S&D, Portugal)**



**Portfolio: Cohesion and Reforms**

## **100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Tenants' Association of Bonn**

In a one day workshop<sup>6</sup>, the Tenant's Association of Bonn celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary November 22.



**Felix von Grünberg**, chair of the Mieterverein Bonn and **Heike Keilhofer**, head of the office, presented a comprehensive program concentrated on several crucial issues for Bonn and its neighbouring areas, a booming metropolitan region with exploding prices, constant migration, a growing housing demand in the affordable sector which cannot be matched by the market. The workshop was attended by approximately 100 participants, representing civil society, politics, economic actors, employers, housing providers, planners and the city representatives.

<sup>5</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/president-elect-speech-original\\_1.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/president-elect-speech-original_1.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.mieterbund-bonn.de/services/files/Das%20Wohnen%20von%20morgen%20-%20Programm.pdf>



The main outcome- *Bonn needs company owned appartements and worker's housing to get out of the crisis.* The creation of 15.000 new jobs in Bonn must be accompanied with the respective housing supply.

Deutscher Mieterbund president **Lukas Siebenkotten** underlined the need to find more “out of the box”- solutions and a strong cooperation between the federal and the urban city/regional level to overcome the longstanding housing crisis that Bonn is facing.

In an international workshop with inputs from **Javier Buron**, head of the housing department of Barcelona and **Barbara Steenbergen** from IUT, solutions of quota for affordable housing, the revitalization of the existing housing stock, community land trusts, recommunisation of housing, strong political and legal regulations restricting touristification and financialisation and the new EU urban agenda with current financing models were discussed.<sup>7</sup>

## IUT members at international housing conference in Lisbon

The Friedrich Ebert Foundation – Portugal, the CICS.NOVA Research Center and the Collective Urbanólogo, in collaboration with the Goethe-Institut Portugal organized the international conference “Housing for all in Europe – What problems? What solutions?”, on November 15, 2019.



The conference comes at a time when housing has gained particular prominence in the European landscape. In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, the European Union has no competence to legislate on housing matters, however, it is undeniable that different measures of the various European institutions have an influence on access to housing in the Member States.

In view of the above, four panels debated the impact of EU policies on housing access and, analysed different forms of contestation and cooperation in the European context.

“Housing for all in Europe – What Problems? What Solutions?” brought together national and international experts<sup>8</sup>. These included **Helena Roseta** (constituent member of the Portuguese parliament, legislative member several times, author of the first draft law based on housing in 2018. The basic law was approved in 2019), **Karin Zauner-Lohmeyer** (spokesperson for the European Citizens’ Initiative “Housing for All”), **Georgia Alexandri** (University of Leeds), **Rui Bochman Neves Franco** (substitute housing councillor of Lison, EU partnership for affordable housing) **Irene Escorihuela Blasco** (Tenants’ association Barcelona), **Luis Mendes** (Tenants’ association Lisbon), **Wibke Werner** (Berlin Tenants’ Association) and **Barbara Steenbergen** (International Union of Tenants). The 8 hours

<sup>7</sup>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j8Dzf3GeiOQ&feature=youtu.be>

<sup>8</sup> [https://fes-portugal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/cvs\\_Housing-for-all-in-Europe\\_final-1.pdf](https://fes-portugal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/cvs_Housing-for-all-in-Europe_final-1.pdf)

debate concentrated on the massive financialisation of housing, touristification, the golden visa problem and new ways for affordable rental housing in Portugal by setting the new housing law into force<sup>9</sup> and was attended by 140 participants. After the meeting, activists of the **tenants' association of Lisbon (AIL)** and several residents' initiatives organized an internal round to discuss next actions to support the European Citizens' Initiative.

## Presenting the European Citizens Initiative at the European Parliament

The European Citizens' Initiative "Housing for All" was presented at the European Parliament on the 12th December. 14 Members of the Parliament (MEPs) from three political parties (S&D, Greens/EFA, GUE/NGL) showed their support. The event was hosted by **Ernest Urtasun** (Spain), co-hosted by **Kim van Sparrentak** (The Netherlands), **Leïla Chaïbi** (France) and **Evelyn Regner** (Austria). Other MEPs present: **Andreas Schieder** (Austria), **Sylvie Guillaume** (France), **Isabel Garcia** (Spain), **Manon Aubry** (France), **Manuel Pizarro** (Portugal), **Martin Schirdewan** (Germany), **Estrella Durá** (Spain), **Idoia Villanueva Ruiz** (Spain), **Pierfrancesco Majorino** (Italy) and **Agnes Jongerius** (The Netherlands).



The delegation from Portugal, **Helena Roseta** (candidate for the UN special rapporteur for the right to housing, **Manuel Pizarro MEP** (S&D) , **Isabel Santos MEP** ( S&D) with Barbara Steenbergen

## Hearing on the Leipzig Charter 2.0 in the Committee of the Regions

IUT was invited to participate in a stakeholder hearing organized by the German Government on the Leipzig Charter 2.0, November 27-28. The charter will be the central document on urban policy of the German EU-presidency in the second half of 2020. Stakeholders, including CoR member **Kieran McCarthy** (Ireland) debated the draft passage by passage and reclaimed – in line with the IUT- more referrals to the EU Urban Agenda as well as to services for the common good as affordable housing.



Hearing at CoR, with representatives from German ministry for interior affairs

9

<https://www.publico.pt/2019/11/15/economia/noticia/fundos-europeus-comecar-financiar-directamente-politicas-habitacao-1893926>

The German Association for Housing, Urban and Spatial Development is contracted by the German Government to lead the final approval process with the EU member states. Updates are expected during the EU-presidency of Croatia, first half of 2020.

## Integrating the European pillar of Social Rights and the SDGs in the European Semester and the “Social Rights Monitor”



From the right Kélig PUYET (Social Platform Director), Katrin LANGENSIEPEN (MEP), Nicolas SCHMIT (EC Jobs and Social Rights), Conny Reuter (SOLIDAR Secretary General), Agnes JONGERIUS (MEP), László ANDOR (FEPS Secretary General), Giovanni CASALE (ETUC Policy Advisor).

SOLIDAR published the first edition of the **Social Rights Monitor** of this year<sup>10</sup>, a flagship publication that complements the European Semester cycle that coordinates EU fiscal, economic and social policies, with research based on the principles of the **European Pillar of Social Rights**<sup>11</sup> from civil society organisations across 16 countries in Europe. The Monitor sheds light on regional and intergenerational disparities within Member

States that are only superficially reflected in the Country Specific Recommendations.

SOLIDAR organized a discussion about these findings involving academic, political and ground-level experts in the European Parliament on the 13<sup>th</sup> November 2019. The discussion identified how these issues can be more prominent in the European Semester in order to effectively integrate the European Pillar of Social Rights in the process. So far, indeed, the Semester doesn't give sufficient weight to the principles of the EPSR and the SDGs in the Country Specific Recommendations. By putting these aspects at the core of the Semester process, inequalities in Member States can be better addressed and European solutions proposed, thus ensuring upward social convergence.

Almost all members of the Solidar Network warn that affordable and quality housing has become less accessible in recent years. Especially in urban centres and some touristic hotspots property prices and rents have risen sharply. A striking example: In Czechia, prices for housing have risen by a shocking 23% since the beginning of 2015.<sup>13</sup> Especially in big cities such as Prague and Brno, housing is rapidly becoming the least affordable of the EU.

**Agnes Jongerius**, MEP put a special focus on the housing situation in Europe, quoting the article 19 of the Social Pillar:

***“Housing and assistance for the homeless:***

- a. Access to social housing or housing assistance of good quality shall be provided for those in need.*
- b. Vulnerable people have the right to appropriate assistance and protection against forced eviction.*
- c. Adequate shelter and services shall be provided to the homeless in order to promote their social inclusion.”*

<sup>10</sup>[http://www.solidar.org/system/downloads/attachments/000/001/001/original/SRM\\_2019\\_Full\\_NO\\_BLANKS.pdf?1573578205](http://www.solidar.org/system/downloads/attachments/000/001/001/original/SRM_2019_Full_NO_BLANKS.pdf?1573578205)

<sup>11</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)

Jongerius stressed that *“the housing crisis is going to implode. From Czech Republic to Portugal people have difficulties to find a place to live. The housing crisis and the problem of homelessness now has to be our priority”*.

**Nicolas Schmit** (S&D), EU-Commissioner for jobs and social rights, remarks that *“housing has become the focal point of our inequality in Europe.”*

## EU Charter of Fundamental Rights marks its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary

On 1 December 2019, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary since it became legally binding, with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 December 2009.

The Charter is an essential tool in making sure that people's fundamental rights are promoted and protected.

### Article 34 states:

*“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 the rules laid down by Community law and national laws and practices.”*

Earlier this year, the EU Commission published a report<sup>12</sup> on how the EU institutions and Member States have been applying the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The report showed that European policy makers are increasingly aware of the importance of ensuring that initiatives are compliant with the Charter. The Charter is however still not

<sup>12</sup>[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_19\\_2790](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_19_2790)

used to its full potential and awareness remains low. The Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) 2019 report<sup>13</sup> shows that Member States continue to lack national policies promoting awareness and implementation of the Charter.

The main finding of FRA towards the EU legislator is to the “Equal Treatment Directive” with regard to the overwhelming evidence of discrimination on different grounds in areas such as education, social protection and access to goods and services, including housing. This would ensure that EU legislation offers comprehensive protection against discrimination in key areas of life, including on grounds of religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation.

## Workshop “Adressing housing market imbalances”



European Commission, Berlaymont building

The European Commission organized a one-day workshop on “Addressing housing market imbalances” on the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

The global financial crisis underlined the importance of housing developments for macroeconomic stability. EU countries have strengthened policy framework to address boom-bust dynamics in the housing sector.

<sup>13</sup><https://fra.europa.eu/en/press-release/2019/rising-inequalities-and-harassment-fundamental-rights-protection-falters>



However, questions remain on the effectiveness, timeliness and implementation difficulties of some of these policy measures, including the fiscal, macro-prudential or regulatory field. Moreover, housing affordability has become a pressing policy issue in many EU countries in recent years. The workshop aims at gathering researchers and policy makers to shed light on these questions.

The first session focused on general issues associated with housing market imbalances, the second session on macro-prudential measures, notably questions related to effectiveness and implementation difficulties. The workshop concluded with a policy panel discussing the experience of selected countries in addressing housing bubbles.

In the presentation of **Frank van Hoenselaar** from the De Nederlandsche Bank, “The relation between supply constraints and house price dynamics in the Netherlands”, he analysed the effect of supply constraints on the dynamics of house prices in the Netherlands. *“In particular, we look at whether income shocks lead to stronger house price increases in regions characterized with higher supply constraints. We use a panel dataset that contains 316 municipalities over the years 1987-2016.”* They divided municipalities in three equally sized groups according to the extent of supply constraints present in each municipality. M

- House price dynamics in the NL differ between the least and most supply constrained municipalities.
- The results suggest that positive income shocks are associated with significantly larger increase in house prices in municipalities that face stronger supply constraints.

- It is puzzling that other types of demand shocks (like interest rates) do not have a significantly different impact on house prices in more restricted municipalities.

**Christian Hilber** from the London School of Economics presented “Housing Taxes and Subsidies, Supply Constraints, and Housing Affordability: The case of “Help to Buy”, starting with one evident fact: housing is increasingly unaffordable in many prosperous cities. The crisis is all around the world, Hong Kong, Vancouver, but also many European cities, particularly in London, Barcelona and Paris.

Countries increasingly respond to crisis by subsidizing owner-occupied housing. There are different kind of subsidies:

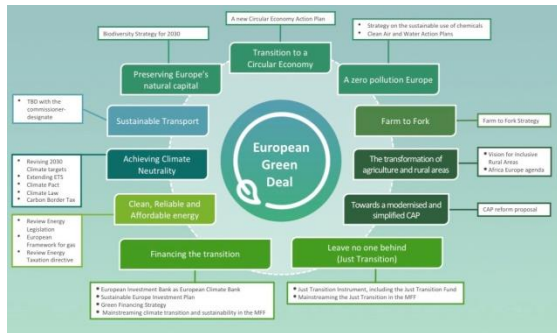
- Via income tax system
- subsidies aim to lower annual mortgage payments directly
- subsidies help borrowers overcome down-payment constraints
- subsidies aiming to stimulate housing construction by tying subsidy to purchase of new build property

All these subsidies ultimately aim to make owner-occupied housing more accessible and more affordable. Despite of that, **Christian Hilber** underlined that these policies doesn't achieve their aims and have negative economic effects.

**Hilber** focused on the economic impacts of UK's “Help to Buy” policy. The aim is to help down-payment and liquid constrained households to purchase a home and to stimulate housing construction. But the “Help-to Buy” policy encourages construction in the “wrong places”, it means where it is easy to build and not where productive jobs are. Moreover, this subsidy appears to end up

benefiting owners of land and developers and not really the people in need.<sup>14</sup>

## The European Green Deal



The new European Commission President, **Ursula von der Leyen** shared her vision of “becoming the world’s first climate-neutral continent”. When presenting the lineup of Commissioners in September 2019, **Ursula von der Leyen** put the ‘Green New Deal’ at the top of the priority list in the new legislative period, highlighting that Vice-President **Frans Timmermans** will be responsible to rollout this multi-layered strategic plan.

With the European Green Deal, the ambitious project is that the EU should cut emissions by 55% by 2030 and to become climate neutral by 2050.

The European Green Deal will focus on the fight against climate change and other environmental objectives in areas such as transport, energy, pollution, agriculture, circular economy and biodiversity<sup>15</sup>, next to the carbon border tax up to 100 billion Euro to finance the transition.

*“The European Green Deal is on one hand about cutting emission but on the other hand is about creating job and innovation”* said the

President **von der Leyen** during the press conference 11th of December 2019.

*“We have also to be sure that no one is left behind. In other words, this transition will either be working for all and be just or do not work at all”.*

With regard to housing and renovation, **von der Leyen** announced a ‘**renovation wave**’ initiative for the building sector in 2020, focusing on particular on “public housing”. As part of the “just transition mechanism” a “just financing for renovation for normal households” was particularly mentioned. These are the relevant passages of the EC communication<sup>16</sup>:

*“The risk of energy poverty must be addressed for households that cannot afford key energy services to ensure a basic standard of living. Effective programmes, such as financing schemes for households to renovate their houses, can reduce energy bills and help the environment. In 2020, the Commission will produce guidance to assist Member States in addressing the issue of energy poverty.”* (page 6)

*“An essential aim would be to organise renovation efforts into larger blocks to benefit from better financing conditions and economies of scale. The Commission will also work to lift national regulatory barriers that inhibit energy efficiency investments in rented and multi-ownership buildings. Particular attention will be paid to the renovation of social housing, to help households who struggle to pay their energy bills.”* (page 10)

<sup>14</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/events/addressing-housing-market-imbalances-2019-dec-06\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/events/addressing-housing-market-imbalances-2019-dec-06_en)

<sup>15</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/europe-an-green-deal-communication-annex-roadmap\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/europe-an-green-deal-communication-annex-roadmap_en.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/europe-an-green-deal-communication\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/europe-an-green-deal-communication_en.pdf)

## Public, cooperative and social housing providers on Europe's Green Deal

Housing Europe organized a meeting discussing the role of housing providers as “brokers of Europe's Green Deal” at the House of Dutch Provinces, December 5.

Presenting the Horizon 2020 HEART project, the workshop provided answers to some practical questions that rise when measures are about to be implemented on the ground. In what ways can Smart Energy Renovation solutions be tailored to people's needs? How can we “teach” a building to predict and adapt? And why is it key to overcome the terminology hurdle to make sure no one is left behind?



From the left **Robin van Leijen** (Aedes), **Kim van Sparrentak** (MEP), **Philippa Nuttall Jones** (FORESIGHT Climate & Energy), **Emmanuelle Maire** (EC DG ENV), **Julien Dijol** (Housing Europe).

**Kim van Sparrentak** MEP underlined that the Green Deal is a renovation initiative especially for the housing sector in order to change construction towards CO2 neutrality.

**Emmanuelle Maire**, head of Unit at the DG Environment (ENV) for sustainable production, products and consumption talked about the necessity of rethink the whole life of a building construction (life cycle assessment LCA). For that reason she

underlined the importance of project such as the HEART project<sup>17</sup>. HEART is about transforming existing buildings into smart buildings. It is a quick decision-making tool which utilises advanced data analysis to predict and guarantee energy efficiency.

## A Green New Deal for All?

The Housing Solution Platform Debates "A Green New Deal for all Europeans?" took place on 9th December in the European Parliament.



This event, co-organised with the “Right to Energy Coalition”, brought together MEPs, social and environmental NGOs to discuss how the Green Deal could be shaped to address both climate and social justice.

In this occasion FEANTSA and the Fondation Abbé Pierre launched their thematic report on existing national mechanisms to address fuel poverty in housing<sup>18</sup>.

The two MEPs on the panel were invited to comment on the report. **Cornelia Ernst** MEP (GUE/NGL) argued that the EU needs a new philosophy for its regional and structural funds to meet the important twin challenges of climate change and social justice. **Mounir Satouri** MEP (Greens/EFA) told that the climate challenge should be viewed as a social and economic opportunity for improving living conditions and creating employment, and as

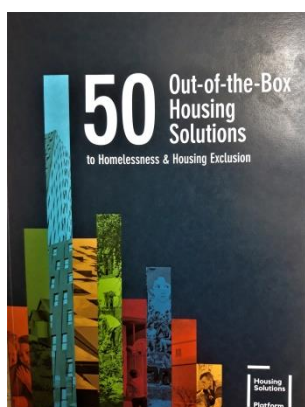
<sup>17</sup> <https://heartproject.eu/>

<sup>18</sup> [https://99536665-f232-4d42-aa6c-b165414b34b8.filesusr.com/ugd/bcd9b3\\_cc7b5a6969bb4573bade485726ea30a.pdf](https://99536665-f232-4d42-aa6c-b165414b34b8.filesusr.com/ugd/bcd9b3_cc7b5a6969bb4573bade485726ea30a.pdf)

opportunity to revive a collective belief in the European project<sup>19</sup>.

## 50 Out-of-the-Box Housing Solutions to Homelessness and Housing Exclusion

Widespread increasing housing prices and budget cuts on social spending over the last few years have contributed to an increasing number of people being “locked out” of the housing market i.e. being unable to access adequate quality affordable housing and therefore being excluded from the housing market or inadequately housed. The **Housing Solutions Platform** has put together a collection of some innovative and daring examples of housing solutions.



The publication presented at the European Parliament on December 11<sup>th</sup>, aims to encourage different stakeholders to become more innovative in the provision of affordable housing solutions and to fill the gaps in existing systems.

There are also some unorthodox solutions mentioned in the publication, e.g. “*La Ch’tite Maison Solidaire: Using Airbnb income to house vulnerable people*” which is a small-scale project created by French citizens in

Lille. To support people sleeping rough or facing inadequate housing in migrant camps, the initiator of the project decided to use his income from Airbnb to rent a house for refugees and homeless people. In only 2 years they collected and used 50.000 EUR.

*“Homelessness is arising all around Europe, except Finland. We have to act now and we have to include social aspect in the European semester”* said **Katrin Langensiepen** MEP (Greens/EFA).

**Ricardo Barranco** from the Joint Research Center of the European Commission presented the report “*The Future of the Cities. Opportunities, challenges and the way forward*”<sup>20</sup> in line with the EU urban agenda and the EU partnership for affordable housing, where IUT contributed actively.

While urban population will continue growing across most of the globe, Europe also has to cope with new challenges related to a declining and ageing population in many cities. On the hand, high population growth (between 25-50% by 2050) will occur mostly in medium size capitals, such as Vienna, Budapest, Prague, or large regional cities in France as well as in Munich or Bologna. Some cities, such as Brussels, Luxembourg and Stockholm could expect even higher growth by more than 50%. On the other hand, population loss exceeding 25% will occur mainly in small and less populated cities in Eastern Germany, Spain, Latvia, Lithuania and Bulgaria. Cities will need to cope with existing issues such as providing affordable housing to an increasingly varied population, ensuring inclusiveness and integration among its communities, and reducing environmental impacts.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.housing-solutions-platform.org/single-post/2019/12/10/Energy-Poverty-Report-Launched-at-European-Parliament>

<sup>20</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/news/future-cities-opportunities-challenges-and-way-forward>



## Meeting Katarina Barley MEP at the European Economic and Social Committee

During the first part of the meeting of the Liaison Group of the European Economic and Social Committee November 19<sup>th</sup>, the members had the opportunity to discuss with **Katarina Barley** (S&D), Vice-President of the European Parliament in charge of relations with citizens. The focus was especially on improving EU relations by the involvement of more civil society organisations.



Next to the Liaison Group Co-chair **Conny Reuter**, **Katarina Barley** (Vice President of the EP in charge of relations with citizens).

The chair of the EESC Liaison Group, **Conny Reuter**, suggested a consultation in the EP on this theme

The second part of the meeting was dedicated to the presentation of 9 new member organisations of the EESC liaison group:

- ACE (Architects' Council of Europe)
- ALDA (European Association for Local Democracy)
- CPME (Standing Committee of European Doctors)
- EDRI (European Digital Rights)
- EVBB (European Association of Institutes for Vocational Training)
- ELEN (European Language Equality Network)

- FEANI (European Federation of National Engineering Associations)
- SDG Watch
- UIPI (International Union of Property Owners)

## Happy birthday to Jan Laurier

The IUT Brussels team sends best wishes to our **Vice-President Jan Laurier**, who celebrated his 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary November 15<sup>th</sup>.



**Jan Laurier**, a Dutch politician, started his political career 1990 as group chair of Green Left Party in the council of his home city Leiden, he became alderman for social affairs, a function he fulfilled for 5 years. From 2007 to 2011, he was a member of the Dutch Senate, representing the GreenLeft Party. In 2002 **Jan Laurier** became director of the Landelijke Cliëntenraad, the national council for people receiving social security-allowances. From 2004-2016 he was chair of the **Nederlandse Woonbond**, the Dutch Union of Tenants. **Jan Laurier is Vice-President of IUT** since 2010. For his merits for society, he was appointed officer of the order of Orange Nassau.

## Happy retirement to Elena Szolgayová, an European architect of international housing policy



**Dr. Elena Szolgayová**, an architect and urban planner with long-standing research experience, has been advising state and municipal housing and urban policy makers since the early 1990s. In 1999 she joined the state administration, recently acts as **Director General, DG Housing Policy and Urban Development at the Ministry of Transport and Construction in Bratislava, Slovakia**. For over two decades participated on shaping the visions of the global and European housing and urban development policies and was one of those steering the process toward formulation and adoption of the **Geneva UN Charter on sustainable housing**. She was a member of the Preparatory Bureau for the **Habitat III** conference and participated in the Policy Unit on Housing during the preparatory process of the New Urban Agenda. Currently she is one of coordinators of the **Housing Partnership under the Urban Agenda for the EU**. She has contributed to numerous international working groups, as well as UNECE and research publications and conferences related to urban and housing issues. In 2013 was re-elected as **Chair of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management**.



Reception for **Elena Szolgayová** (in the centre) at the Vienna House Brussels, December 4, with IUT president **Marie Linder**; Vienna House Director **Michaela Kauer** and colleagues from the EU affordable housing partnership

**Elena Szolgayová** will retire at the end of 2019. IUT and Elena cooperated from the first UNECE years, and since the opening of the EU liaison office in Brussels she was key-note speaker in many IUT conferences at EU level. With her diplomatic skills and expertise she managed to achieve broad majorities for highly complex International and European dossiers- especially the 3-years coordination of the EU Urban Agenda Partnership for Affordable Housing showed that she can sail a ship through the stormy ocean.

We know that Elena will stay connected to the International housing community and we will continue to ask for her advice in affordable housing policies. Dear Elena, thank you for your admirable work throughout the years!

### **Ilaria D'Auria and Barbara Steenbergen**

The IUT Brussels office wishes Merry Christmas and a happy new year 2020!

@ IUT Brussels

Barbara Steenbergen

Head of the IUT EU liaison Office

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