



# International Union of Tenants

## Association Internationale des Locataires

- Consultative status with  
UN Economic and Social  
Council  
- Participatory Status with  
Council of Europe

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### Minutes

#### IUT Board Meeting

#### Virtual meeting via Zoom

28 October 2020, 15.00 hrs to 18.00 hrs CET

#### Present

Finland	Anne Viita, Vuokralaiset Oy
France	Eddie Jacquemart, CNL
Germany	Lukas Siebenkotten, DMB
The Netherlands	Zeno Winkels, Woonbond
Norway	Lars Aasen, LBF
Sweden	Hans Eklund, SUT

IUT	Marie Linder, President
	Annika Wahlberg, Secretary General
	Jan Lauriér, Vice President
	Rolf Gassmann, Vice President
	Barbara Steenbergen, Head IUT Brussels
	Stefan Runfeldt, Assistant Secretary

Apologies	Pablo Blöchliger, ASLOCA, Switzerland
	Marisa Perchtold, MVÖ, Austria
	Lenka Tarabova, SON, Czechia
	Helene Toxværd, LLO, Denmark

Observers	Jean-Michel Campanella, President of the Luxembourg Tenants Union
	Aldina Ganeto, Luxembourg Tenants Union
	Anne Lucet-Dallongeville, CNL

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|----------------------------------|---|-------|
| <b>1. Opening of the meeting</b> | Marie Linder opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the meeting.   | Marie |
| <b>2. Adoption of the agenda</b> | The agenda was adopted with the addition of discussing two newly released housing policy reports from the EESC and the European Parliament. | Marie |

<b>3. Appointment of a person to approve the minutes</b>	The Board chose Lars Aasen to approve the minutes.	Marie
<b>4. Minutes from the previous Board meeting</b>	The minutes from last Board meeting on 28 May 2020 were approved without changes.	Annika <b>App. 1</b>
<b>5. Action points from the previous Board meeting</b>	No action points that are not already on the agenda.	Annika
<b>6. Election of new members</b>	<p>a. National Tenants Union of Ghana  <i>Annika said that the ExCom has reviewed them and recommends accepting the organisations as Associate Member. The Board decided in accordance with the ExCom proposal.</i></p> <p>b. Luxembourg Association of Tenants (Mieterschutz Lëtzebuerg, ML)  <i>Barbara reported that she and Lukas Siebenkotten has met the President of the organisation and are in contact. There has also been contacts between ML and the tenants' unions in Switzerland and Belgium, since they have similarities in their housing laws and structure. Barbara also noted the historical moment in that we are accepting one more organisation in as a Board member of the IUT.</i></p> <p><i>Annika said that the ExCom has reviewed them and recommends accepting the organisations as Board Member. The Board decided in accordance with the ExCom proposal.</i></p> <p><i>Following the decision, Jean-Michel Campanella, President of the Luxembourg Association of Tenants was invited into the meeting. Marie Linder welcomed them and congratulated the organisation for their successful start.</i></p> <p><i>Jean-Michel Campanella said that ML was founded earlier this year, and they have seen a big interest in them already, both from members, media and other organisations. They have already organised a demonstration together with the trade unions and progressive parties of Luxembourg.</i></p> <p>c. Confirmation of membership  <i>In accordance with our statutes, we need to confirm the members that we approved at last meeting. That is:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations</li> <li>- Sindicato de Llogateres (Tenants Union of Catalonia)</li> <li>- Confédération Consommation Logement Ca-dre de Vie (CLCV)</li> </ul> <i>The Board decided to confirm the memberships.</i></p>	Annika <b>App. 2 a, b</b> <b>App. 3 a, b</b>

## 7. Current national issues, Housing and Covid-19 update

All

**Finland** – Housing benefits are on a good level, so the tenants are not in a bad situation so far. But in terms of Covid it's getting worse. Especially it will affect the hospitality industry where we expect increased unemployment.

**France** – Welcome to a new board member! Eddie suggested the CNL and Luxembourg Tenants Union set up a meeting to discuss future cooperation and strategies. In France, the Covid crisis is very hard at the moment, and restrictions are tough. Consequences for tenants too. CNL has requested rent holidays and a stop for evictions. Since 10 July evictions are allowed again in France, and this worries us. Some people has ended up on the streets. There are a lot of people that are worried. We are about to have a new lock-down, especially in the Paris region. There is not any special support to tenants so far, and a lot of people are at risk of unemployment, hence having a hard time to pay the rents.

**Germany** – We have not seen so many evictions so far. The social aid has been reformed in light of the pandemic, to make it easier to receive. DMB has argued for a rental fund without success so far, the landlords have said that it's not necessary. The rents in general are still on the rise in Germany. The Berliner rental stop has been challenged in the courts, and it seems that only the federal parliament can decide on such a law.

**The Netherlands** – In terms of Covid, there is a law against evictions, and the rules have been improved since spring. The Netherlands will have elections in March, and the Woonbond is active to lift the issues of housing and social housing. The rent levels have increased for a lot of people in The Netherlands. There is a waiting list for about 10 years for social housing in the bigger cities. There are challenges in that the government is removing money from the social housing sector, and this increases the lack of housing. About 360 local tenants' organisations have been active in the election campaign, and the Woonbond is offering tools for the local associations to talk to their local mayors and politicians.

**Norway** – There is a big political discussion about housing right now. Especially young people have a hard time to establish themselves on the housing market. The debate on housing started as the government told that they are going to put forward a new social housing policy to parliament. The Norwegian Tenants Union was invited to contribute to this process. With the help of Stefan Runfeldt from the SUT, the tenants' union provided a report to the government on these matters. Two weeks ago, the government said that they have changed their mind and will instead release a strategy paper, which means that the government can decide for it themselves. Covid are increasing in Norway, and strong restrictions are in place. Luckily, we haven't seen many evictions yet. Most people

have managed on social security. The hospitality industry is in a tough position, and people have become unemployed.

**Sweden** – We see increases in infections of Covid, but the restrictions are not as hard as many other countries. New regional restrictions have been introduced, but they are still only as recommendations. The government has increased the housing allowance for families with children. We have seen a slight decrease in evictions during the pandemic. The SUT has started a project called Good Neighbours to help neighbours to help each other. So far, around 16 000 people have volunteered for the project.

The Swedish government has an ongoing investigation to introduce market rents in newly built houses, and we are participating in this investigation as experts. However, we are also working to stop the proposal entirely. The SUT is communicating extensively on stopping market rents, and we have a two-year plan until the next national elections.

**Luxembourg** – We are also seeing increases in the spread of Covid. We have been trying to push for a second eviction ban, however it seems hard. The government are planning a stop on rent increases, but a lot of landlords are ignoring the law and it is hard to enforce. This is a big problem for tenants. Luxembourg are very dependent on cross border workforce, about 100-150 000 a day. So, we can't close our borders to the neighbouring countries.

**Belgium** – We have the worse Covid situation in Europe right now, and the government has introduced a curfew between 22-06 every day. We do not see a lot of evictions so far, but it happens and mostly to really vulnerable tenants, many of them rent in the black market. There has been allowance of 215 euros per person, but this was paid out as a one-time allowance and therefore not a big help in the long run. We have a big problem of general homelessness. Homeless people can now get a paper from their commune that they are allowed to sleep in the streets. It shows the level of the problem, and lack of policy responses.

## **8. Housing Policy Working Group (HPWG)**

The Executive committee, and Dan Nicander, chair of the HPWG, suggested as purpose of the group 1) to move swiftly in response to EU consultations. 2) Develop tools for lobbying at national levels, exchange of best practice. Making the networking stronger over time so all can get to know each other. Three areas on which to concentrate:

1. Monitor and follow the Initiative report on affordable housing (early next year meeting)
2. SGEI (early next year meeting)
3. The green deal and renovation wave (this year, short meeting)

Annika  
**App. 4**

*The board approved the suggestion from the ExCom.*

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**Reports on Housing policy:**

Anne Lucet-Dallongeville brought up two reports on the access to affordable housing. Presentation of the draft reports of the European Economic and Social Committee “Universal access to housing that is decent, sustainable and affordable over the long term”, and of the European Parliament “Access to decent and affordable housing for all“. Anne attended a webinar discussing the reports. She reported that for the European Parliament report, the CNL had put forward suggestions through the French shadow rapporteur. The suggestions included introducing a Winter truce, better regulation of Airbnb, strengthening social housing and securing decent money left to live after the rent is paid. These suggestions were accepted in the report and, Anne said that the report includes a lot of good proposals for the tenants.

The HPWG will also discuss these reports.

**9. EU Renovation wave**

Barbara gave an update on the big package on EU renovation wave. The package was released recently, and the policies are developing fast. The EU is also revising its energy efficiency directive. The 11 claims by the IUT towards the EU Green Deal renovation wave has been very important in the lobbying work. IUT had a very productive meeting with one of the Cabinet ministers of the Commission.

Barbara

The Commission and other lobby groups are pushing for a stronger system of individual metering right now. Barbara has made strong claims for an opt out for countries with gross rents. The Commission will review the energy labels regulation to push for more use of renewable energy in the housing sector.

The IUT has been pushing for tenure neutrality, and for tenants’ participation in all renovations. Barbara has been lifting both the Danish model of tenants’ democracy, and the Dutch model where 70% of tenants has to approve of renovations as good examples.

There are two new elements in the EU Renovation wave that are extra interesting.

- Frans Timmermans, the commissioner responsible, has said that there will be an affordable housing initiative for 100 districts all over Europe and fund energy renovations in those districts. This will probably focus on Eastern and Southern EU. This is connected to the new EU Bauhaus initiative.

- So far, we don't know anything about the criteria for selecting them, but this will be part of the cohesion policy.
- New legislation to fight energy poverty. So far it has just been communicated and we don't know exactly what it will contain.

Follow closely. Currently the Commission are revising current initiatives, and the new ones will come later in 2021.

Some comments from the Board was that one crucial issue to follow is financing schemes. If the commission puts new hard goals, they should also follow up on who will have to pay for the renovations. IUT thinks it is important to lift the tenants' perspectives here. The question really is: Who will pay for the renovations.

The commission will suggest money for the social housing sector. But the worst cases of renovations are really in the private sector. And we have to focus on this also. Passing on the costs to tenants needs to be prevented, and this is mostly regulated in national law.

*The board approved the report.*

## 10. GDPR

Marie reported that there is ongoing work to update IUTs privacy policy and GDPR. Marie

*The board approved the report.*

## 11. EY Survey

Barbara stressed that it is important that as many as possible answer the e-mailed survey. Barbara

This is a big dossier that we are working on and regards the SGEI state aid, and the target groups. We have been identified by the EC as a key stakeholder. Sweden, Netherlands and Portugal have or will answer it, and it is crucial to follow the developments.

*The board approved the report.*

## 12. Activity reports and plans for 2021

Annika reported on the Activities in 2020 so far (See appendix) Annika and Barbara reported on the plans for 2021. (see appendix) Annika/Barbara  
**App. 5**

Eddie reported that it might be time to reduce rents in the light of the pandemic. Marie suggested it might be a comparative webinar between different countries.

Hans suggested that the proposal for activity plan was accepted.

*The Board approved the proposals.*

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|----------------------------|---|---|
| <b>13. Budget for 2021</b> | <b>a) Stockholm</b><br>The budget has been updated in the light of Corona in the autumn 2020 by the Executive Committee who recommends the Board approve the Budget. Communications and research posts have been increased. | Annika/Barbara<br><b>App. 6 &amp; 7</b> |
|                            | <b>b) Brussels</b><br>The Brussels budget has also been updated in the light of the pandemic.   |   |

*The Board approved the reports and budgets.*

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|---|---|--------|
| <b>14. UN Special Rapporteur Survey</b> | A response will be provided by IUT based on previous papers.  | Annika |
| <b>15. Any other business</b>           | No other business was raised.   |        |
| <b>16. Future board meetings</b>        | <b>a) Spring 2021</b><br>The Social Housing Festival has been postponed to 2022. Board meeting in Helsinki 2022.<br>ExCom will propose a date for a meeting in April or May 2021, preliminary 19 April, and then autumn 2021. | Annika |
| <b>17. Closure of the meeting</b>       | IUT President Marie Linder thanked all Board members and closed the meeting.  | Marie  |

Marie Linder  
President

Annika Wahlberg  
Secretary General

Lars Aasen  
Board member

Stefan Runfeldt  
Assistant Secretary