



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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Tenants for Safe and Affordable Housing

IUT World Conference Statement

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During the last century, the fight for affordable rents, fair housing legislation and the promotion of social, public and cooperative housing has remained a constant struggle. Similarly discouraging harmful and speculative practices remains an important focus of all tenant unions worldwide.

These challenges remain largely as topical now as a hundred years ago. The solutions to these issues depend not only on the era you happen to live in but also on where you happen to live.

Today's challenges relate to the rapidly growing inequality in most countries: financialisation, gentrification, touristification, rising costs of living, energy poverty the absence of legal means to be part of decisions relating to your home and living environment; however, the essence remains to realise the right to housing as a fundamental human right. As the recent earthquakes in Turkey and Syria have demonstrated, residents must be protected against poor building practices and cost-cutting measures, instead ensuring buildings are built to withstand natural disasters such as earthquakes.

Furthermore, apart from the humanitarian tragedies inflicted upon those having to live through the Russian attack on Ukraine, this war also entails a major shock hitting not only the European economy, but with a global impact. In many places, the rapidly increasing inflation has added to rising living costs, which is a major challenge, especially for low- and middle-income households. This leads to a constant increase in the need for adequate housing. Since the rising demand is not met by the construction activity, access to decent and affordable housing is becoming even tougher. In a European context, the policy as a direct result of the war converges around energy security and poses an immediate threat of energy poverty for large numbers of European tenants.

The current issues yet again highlight the importance of ensuring the following principles are observed by decision-makers, not only in Europe but globally:

- Moratoria on evictions against tenants who have fallen behind with their payments is a crucial tool during periods of economic instability such as the current times.
- The public funding for the energy-efficient renovation of public, affordable, cooperative and social housing is insufficient compared to incentives for private housing. This contributes to the further weakening of tenants with low-and-middle incomes, aggravating the energy poverty of an already fragile group. Public funding should be concentrated on public, affordable, cooperative and social housing as well as on affordable private rental apartments. Should public funding be used for private rental apartments, such arrangements must be subjected to specific conditions e.g. mandatory rent caps.
- Policies on rent stabilisation and controls contribute to preventing the indexation of rents in the face of inflation driving up rents and limiting rent increases, especially in the private rental sector.
- Policies on energy renovations are crucial to ensure renovations do not negatively affect tenants leading to "renovictions" (no evictions by renovation and displacement of residents).
- The maximum level of institutional tenants' participation and democracy, ensure a level playing field with landlords and housing providers.

The IUT, therefore, calls on decision-makers across the globe:

- To ensure the principle of "housing cost neutrality" should be applicable to social, public and private housing in case renovations would lead to rent increases or not be cost neutral – meaning that renovation costs should no longer be passed on to tenants.
- To ensure that energy-poor, low-and-middle income or vulnerable groups will not suffer from energy measures with direct or indirect impact on such groups. Consequently, energy poverty should be better defined to include comfort and health, decent standards of living and its causes: insufficient disposable income, high energy expenditures and poor energy efficiency of homes.
- To engage with civil society organizations like tenant unions, in the form of a platform dedicated to energy poverty alleviation. Tenants Unions should have a say in the legislative process concerning rent stabilisation and control, the provision of affordable housing and the fight against energy poverty.

The IUT's vision is one where all citizens have a home that they can afford easily. Housing constitutes a fundament for all to participate in our society. Secure, affordable and healthy housing is a precondition to access education, employment and genuine social security. The IUT bases its demands upon the UN Charter, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Article 11.1, which states, that the member countries must provide conditions, which enable their citizens to achieve "adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing."

The IUT plans to continue its activities in raising awareness of the increasing housing and energy costs for tenants, which have a negative effect on the entire economy.

The IUT takes the lead on these issues and is determined to be an active part in the realisation of these demands and aims at being a credible and trustworthy partner in finding the solutions required.

Tenants are united in our determination for safe and affordable housing at the International Union of Tenants 2023 World Conference.

The International Union of Tenants (IUT) was founded in 1926 and is a nongovernmental and not-for-profit umbrella membership organisation with the purpose of safeguarding tenants' interests and promoting affordable and decent rental housing across the world. Its members consist of 75 national and local tenants' associations in 51 countries. IUT head office is located in Stockholm with an EU representation office in Brussels. IUT considers housing as one of the fundamental rights, which needs to be addressed locally, nationally and internationally. Adequate housing is also one of the safeguards for peace and security.