



Spring 2024

◆◆◆ IUT's Manifesto Presentation in the European Parliament ◆◆◆



On the 25th of January 2024 IUT represented its **Manifesto to the European Parliament**¹ together with the launch of Housing Europe's Manifesto. To lead the way out of the Housing Crisis, it is fundamental that the focus on financing of affordable rental housing crisis and energy renovations will be present as a priority in the next legislative period of the EP 2024-2029. The focus on the housing crisis is growing at European level - the European Parliament held a discussion on the lack of affordable homes and difficulties people face to find a decent place to live. The next European Parliament must build up on the growing momentum.

The MEPs **Barry Andrews** (Renew Europe, IRL), **Leila Chaibi** (The Left, F), **Kim van Sparrentak** (The Greens/EFA, NL), **Elisabetta**

Gualmini (S&D, IT), and **Dennis Radtke** (EPP, DE), moderated by the Secretary General of Housing Europe **Sorcha Edwards**, shared their views on the ways out of the housing crisis. Subsequently, the Walloon Minister of Housing **Christophe Collignon** outlined the ambition of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU on social and affordable housing.

These interventions were followed by the panel discussion entitled 'How to build momentum about social and affordable housing ahead of the EU elections?'. The panellists **Barbara Steenbergen**, (IUT), Giulio Romani (ETUC), **Michaela Kauer** (Brussels Office of the City of Vienna), **Andrea Colantonio** (EIB), **Ruth Paserman** (European Commission) and Housing Europe's President **Bent Madsen** debated about necessary regulation of the private rental sector and EU financing for social and affordable not for profit rental housing providers.

¹ <https://www.iut.nu/news-events/iut-priorities-for-the-european-parliament-2024-2029/>

The main reasons are that many of the measures proposed, including the Energy Performance of Building Directive (EPBD), the Emissions Trading System 2 (ETS 2), the Energy Efficiency Directive, and the Renewable Energy Directive risk to disproportionately impact on low-income households and marginalised communities. In fact, estimates suggest that the European Green Deal will lead to 20% increase in housing and energy costs and 15% increase in food costs. What is consequently needed is a **Green and Social Deal** which proactively addresses the social dimension as a priority.

The Social Platform has identified some Red Flags which must be addressed in a new Green and Social Deal, the first one being tenants: *“Particular attention needs to be given to tenants. Landlords facing new costs due to energy-efficient improvements will pass these costs to tenants with higher rents, making adequate housing more expensive. Low-income tenants, who are already in the lowest quality housing in the market, will face renovictions, evictions by renovations. Measures to encourage energy efficiency must be taken, but with the appropriate support in order to avoid any unforeseen consequences on people already struggling to secure a decent home.*

This support can be carried out through the Social Climate Fund (e.g. climate housing allowances) and through legally binding social safeguards for tenants, like housing cost neutrality after retrofitting and rent caps after renovation in the EPBD and in national energy and rent laws.”

Tackling Energy Poverty in Europe: time to renovate buildings!

On the 24th of January, the ComAct final Conference took place in Brussels. The conference dived into how that Europe’s legislation effectively addresses Energy

Poverty, specifically looking at the case of multi-family apartment buildings in Central and Eastern Europe.

In 2023, 41 million EU citizens (9.3% of the population) could not afford proper heating due to a cost-of-living crisis and soaring energy costs. Especially in Central and Eastern Europe, the housing stock is old, and highly energy consuming. Multi-apartment buildings are characterized by a high share of ownership; therefore, the process of renovating building is complex and difficult to coordinate.

The conference was concentrated on the need to empower local and national citizen action and in strengthen local communities when implementing the EPBD led by a multi-level governance of EC, EU Member States and cities. Full recording is available here: ⁴

European Conference: “Fighting discrimination and residential exclusion through collaborative housing”



The Network of Cities for Collaborative Housing (NETCO) invited to a conference “Fighting discrimination and residential exclusion through collaborative housing”, January 29-31st in Brussels. The scope of the event was to present different local civil

⁴ [Tackling Energy Poverty In Europe: Time To Renovate Buildings! > BPIE - Buildings Performance Institute Europe](#)

society organisations and their work in fighting discrimination and residential exclusion through collaborative housing.

The event started with the welcoming speeches of the Director General of Brussels Housing Agency **David Van Vooren** and of **Nawal Ben Hamour**, Secretary of State in charge of Housing. **Nele Aernouts**, Researcher at the Vrije Universiteit Brussels, presented an overview of the study re-narrating the right to housing. Since today housing is regaining a pivotal role in urban policies and struggles, there is resurgence of the housing movements and of collective forms of housing activism and self-help. She illustrated that in Belgium social housing represents only the 8% of the whole housing stock and that there are many discriminations on both the private and social housing markets. In addition, multiple legal, spatial, and socio-economic realities in Brussels and in Flanders tied up with existing housing regulations and housing codes impede on the operation/creation of Alternative Housing initiatives.

Despite this, many housing alternatives initiatives are being created and implemented such as “Housing Commons”, collectively owned and used by the Community Land Trust Brussels (CLTB)⁵; and collective housing (Habitat Riga)⁶ with a high degree of third sector involvement, which targets communities commonly excluded from regular housing market such as low-income families, single parent households, senior and homeless. Alternative Housing initiatives enlarge the notion of the right to housing and have a collective character recognizing various forms of disadvantages in

⁵ [Community Land Trust Bruxelles | Des logements pour toujours abordables à Bruxelles \(cltb.be\)](#)

⁶ [Habitat Riga Solidaire et Inclusive, - RIGA Solidaire & Inclusive, \(rigahabitatinclusif.be\)](#)

housing insecurity (discrimination, disability, gender, etc.).

Kristian Borret (BMA), Geert Depauw (CLTB), Geraldine Bruyneel (SAAMO Brussels) and Thomas Dawance (Sohonet); presented respectively the CLTB, the cooperatives, and associations involved in collaborative housing projects. They remarked that in Brussels there is a massive affordable housing shortage, with appr. 50.000 people on the waiting list for social housing with a waiting time of 12 years. More than 7000 people are homeless or poorly housed. Paradoxically, the panellist underlined that there is a huge potential of unused vacant land in the Brussels Capital Region.

Maite Arrondo (Housing Director of Navarra) explained the next steps of the NETCO project.⁷



In the afternoon, the participants went for three field visits in Brussels: Calico, Arc-en-ciel and Casa Viva projects.

The CALICO project⁸ was funded by the former Urban Innovative Actions-program and was developed through a partnership between 8 main partners (including Brussels Capital Region, the CLTB, non-profit associations and universities). The values of mutual care, gender equality, and permanent housing affordability are fundamental to the

⁷ <https://netcoproject.org/>

⁸ [Community Land Trust Bruxelles | Calico \(cltb.be\)](#)

whole of the project. There are in total 34 housing units within this project.



The Arc-en-ciel project⁹ is one of the CLTB pilot projects and was built with passive architecture. The Arc-en-Ciel group was formed in 2012 and after 5 years of preparation, the 32 families moved into their homes in February 2020. The Arc-en-ciel families are actively involved in their neighbourhood.

The Casa Viva project¹⁰ includes 12 solidarity and intergenerational housing units for elderly people and low-income young families. Seven of these housing units are accessible to persons with reduced mobility.

⁹ <https://www.cltb.be/vandenpeereboom-arc-en-ciel/?lang=en>

¹⁰ <https://www.livingstones.be/la-casa-viva>

EPOCH Event: “Towards zero homelessness: only 6 years to succeed” Ministerial Meeting of the EU Ministers in charge of the fight against homelessness.



On the 8th and 9th of February, IUT participated in the Ministerial meeting of the EU Ministers in charge of the fight against homelessness, organised by the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The Conference was opened by **Caroline Gennez**, member of the Belgian Parliament and representative of the Belgian EU Presidency, 50% of homeless population in Europe are below the age of 30. A Housing First youth model is urgently needed. In Belgium, 45 projects that are active across Belgium and that provide support to more than 1200 people experiencing homelessness. The Minister explained the Housing First model, which is an innovative way to strive for social integration of the most vulnerable homeless people.

Housing First Belgium¹¹ was initially an experiment which took place between 2013 and 2016 and was tested in Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent, Hasselt, Molenbeek, Liège, Charleroi and Namur. The majority of the

¹¹ housingfirstbelgium.be

projects had a positive result and continued to expand their operations.

The Conference continued with the contributions of **Yves Leterme**, president of EPOCH. Next, **William Adena**, **Marissa Plouin** and **Ali Bargu** displayed the OECD policy toolkit¹², which allows users to explore the complex and connected societal, economic, and environmental factors that shape housing markets. It also allows policy makers to identify strengths and shortcomings in their housing policies and make informed choices when designing national housing strategies. Furthermore, the toolkit provides all OECD and EU countries with data on homelessness, definitions, monitoring frameworks and toolkit to combat homelessness.

Field Visit in Wallonia - EPOCH Event



On the 9th of February, the EPOCH members and experts have been taken to different field

¹² [Draft Toolkit to Combat Homelessness \(oecd.org\)](https://www.oecd.org/publications/draft-toolkit-to-combat-homelessness/)

visits: one in Brussels, one in Flanders and one in Charleroi, Wallonia.

The **Médihalte Caroloregien** is a residential care service for homeless people. This project provides 6 beds for nursing care with a structure located in Charleroi. The Relais santé (health relay) and Médihalte teams are complementary, in fact they both use the expertise of both centres. A 24-hour service is provided by 5 care assistants. The target group are homeless people regardless of their legal status, in fact the spirit of this residential care service is to welcome unconditionally and that no one is discriminated against due to their homelessness status.

The objectives are: preventing hospitalisation for people who are in bad health conditions and are living in the streets but are not ill enough to be hospitalised; providing post-hospitalisation support for people who are recovering from illness with continuity of care; and finally helping homeless people with their recovery, especially those who are exhausted, suffering from mental distress. Therefore, the ultimate goals are to improve the health of people by allowing them to rest and giving them post-hospital care. It is also fundamental to establish a link with the homeless people who benefit from this service, in order to start the social reintegration with them.

The partners of the project are 5, which have signed a joint declaration. Médecins du Monde (Doctors of the World) is the operator with the expertise to set up the project. The Grand Hospital of Charleroi provides medical supervision and financial and logistical support. The City of Charleroi provides additional logistical resources. The public Centre for Social Action of Charleroi sets up and manages the structure and provides

psychological support for the project in partnership with operators in the extreme poverty network and hospital resources. Last, the Relais social for partnership and financial support. Looking at the future, a project to create a larger-scale Médihalte structure (20 beds by 2025). Financial support from this federal state is essential to ensure the long-term future of Médihalte.

The Triangle non-profit association is a reception facility offering a night shelter, a day centre and a foster house. Both the night shelter and the day centre are open exclusively for families with children, whether minors or adults, as well as pregnant women and couples.

The objectives are to welcome families 24 hours a day, and through the night shelter to offer a safe and warm place, with an educational team available to support actively and redirect people if necessary. The day centre aims to offer a listening capacity from the educational and/or social services throughout the day; to offer support and an internet connection for administrative tasks; to allow children to play, to give them the opportunity to keep their school close by and benefit from tutoring if needed. The work on the parents is focused on parenting and restoring the parents' confidence, meanwhile the work on children is centred on their feelings of sadness, shame, problems and school, with the aim of preserving their mental health. The main partner of the project is 'Public Centre for Social Action' (CPAS) of Charleroi.

IUT at the European Economic and Social Committee: Housing Crisis in Europe: the way forward?



On the 20th of February, the EESC conference “Housing Crisis in Europe: the way forward?”¹³ took stock of the progress made since the launch of the Renovation Wave Strategy as part of the European Green Deal and address some of the main housing challenges in Europe.

With this conference, the EESC gave formal political impetus to **EU ministerial conference on housing in Liège on 4-5 March 2024**¹⁴, and ensured that this issue features in the future terms of office of the European Parliament and the European Commission for the 2024-2029 period.

The first contribution was of EESC President **Oliver Röpke**, who stated EESC’s fundamental

¹³ <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/conference-housing-crisis-europe-way-forward>

¹⁴ <https://belgian-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/en/events/european-conference-of-housing-ministers/#:~:text=As%20part%20of%20the%20Belgian,Li%C3%A8ge%20on%205%20March%202024.>

goal to provide affordable, social, decent, and sustainable housing. Social Housing policies and building renovations should be a priority at the EU, national and local levels. In fact, access to affordable housing is both a social need and a social right, being part of European Pillar of Social Rights. He also remarked that youth organisations should be involved in the design of housing policies at the European level, since young people are the most affected by the current housing crisis.

Nicolas Schmit, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights underlined that the housing crisis is extremely dangerous for social cohesion. Therefore, besides applying the principle of subsidiarity solutions at the EU level are needed to solve the matter. He remarked that a big part of European citizens pays 40% or more of their income in rent and housing taxes. The unsustainable housing burden results in evictions, exclusion, homelessness, and poverty rising. The Commissioner highlighted the importance of EU funds to address this issue and that the European, national, regional, and local levels must be combined to capillary tackle the Housing Crisis in Europe.

In the first panel discussion, the panellist debated on the impact that the Green Deal will have on the access to decent and affordable housing. **Barbara Steenbergen**, Head of Office at IUT Liaison office EU, underlined the fact that right now we have momentum with the support of the EU institutions, to make history in the housing matter. She remarked that we have to implement binding policies towards more affordability and presented the 11 IUT EU-priorities “Eradicate the housing crisis by 2030”¹⁵ which should be integrated in the next mandate of the EU institutions: “Housing is for the common good, and not for profit!”

In the second panel the panellists debated on the impact of the housing crisis on young

¹⁵ <https://www.iut.nu/news-events/iut-priorities-for-the-european-parliament-2024-2029/>

Europeans. **Hans Dubois**, Eurofound, presented a report of Housing exclusion of young adults. **Wim Gabriels**, Director of Erasmus Student Network, presented a study on the impact of the housing crisis on student mobility. **Rossana Zaccaria**, President of Legacoop Abitanti, illustrated the critical housing situation that young Italians face nowadays. **Kurt Peeters**, Board member of the Community Trust Leuven, has displayed the lack of affordable housing in the city of Leuven.

The conference was concluded by **Baiba Miltovica**, President of the EESC section for Transports, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society, who underlined the fact that the target group for housing policies should be broadened since the crisis is affecting also the European middle classes and not just the most vulnerable anymore. Reflecting on the words of the Commissioner Nicolas Schmidt, she stated that Housing should never be or become an object of speculation, but it should always be protected as social need and social right. “We need an European Action Plan on housing”¹⁶

EU Renovation Wave launching 100 Light House districts at the Committee of the Regions



On the 21st of February at the Committee of the Regions the Conference “Launching 100 lighthouse districts”¹⁷, driven by the European Affordable Housing Consortium (SHAPE EU), which is the point of reference for a socially inclusive **EU Renovation Wave**. Its mission is to support affordable housing providers, public authorities, and SMEs to deliver socially just renovations. The event served as a platform for the mentors and mentees that took part in the project, since their experiences are crucial for the optimisation of policies at both the European and local level towards the goal of bringing 100 Lighthouse Districts of the Affordable Housing Initiative to life.

The Conference was opened with a message from **Kadri Simson**, the European Commissioner for Energy, who stressed the importance of the Member States role to

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https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-02/housing_conference_2024_-_conclusions_en.pdf

¹⁷ [Launching 100 lighthouse districts - European Affordable Housing Consortium Final Conference - European Affordable Housing Consortium, SHAPE-EU \(shape-affordablehousing.eu\)](https://www.shape-affordablehousing.eu/)

provide social safeguards for tenants in order to prevent the phenomena of evictions and to protect the most vulnerable households. Then, **Peter Florianschütz**, member of the CoR and Vienna City Council responsible for housing, gave a speech on the city of Vienna Housing Model¹⁸ and on its integrated district renovation. The director of the Vienna House in Brussels, **Michaela Kauer**, underlined: Vienna is the biggest public housing provider in Europe and administers appr. 220,000 municipal flats. 1 Viennese out of 4 lives in a municipal flat. The strength of the social housing dimension in Vienna, makes it one of the world's most liveable cities. In fact, housing is viewed as a public task and part of the common good.

In the first panel discussion, **Maja Staleska** from "Housing and Tenants Organisation Macedonia"¹⁹ and member of IUT, presented a project in Skopje that consists of a building with 9 apartments which originally were in terrible conditions but now is being renovated into an energy efficient and comfortable home for several families.

In the second panel different stakeholders shared their perspective on how to implement an increasingly social inclusive green renovation wave in Europe. **Barbara Steenbergen**, Member of the IUT Executive Committee and Head of Liaison office to the EU, presented as basis of the SHAPE EU project the European Responsible Housing Initiative²⁰, the first voluntarily Corporate Social Responsibility agreement at EU level between the housing and the tenants. The code of conduct established by the European Responsible Housing Initiative, served as a basis for several agreements in housing policy and tenant-friendly renovation. One recent initiative is the Dutch law on good landlordship²¹, which came into force on the 1st of July

¹⁸ [The Vienna model - Socialhousing](#)

¹⁹ <https://hto.org.mk/>

²⁰ [European Responsible Housing Declaration](#)

²¹

[2023. Barbara Steenbergen illustrated that this law represents a milestone in the protection of tenants when it comes to fight discrimination of tenants, illegal rent increases and unfair practices of landlords. This law can be a blueprint used at all governance levels when it comes to safeguarding affordable housing, fair rental and renovation agreements and a discrimination- and harassment-free environment for tenants.²²](https://www.volkshuisvestingnederland.nl/docum</p></div><div data-bbox=)

The conference was closed by **Anna Athanasopoulou**, European Commission. She remarked the ambition of the European Affordable Housing Consortium (SHAPE EU) to create 100 Lighthouse districts by 2030, with the support and commitment taken by the European Commission and the other institutions. One of the main roles of the project is to facilitate project implementation in the European Member States and to listen the residents needs and involving them in the process.

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[enten/publicaties/2023/07/visual-wet-goed-verhuurderschap/visual-wet-goed-verhuurderschap](https://www.volkshuisvestingnederland.nl/docum-enten/publicaties/2023/07/visual-wet-goed-verhuurderschap/visual-wet-goed-verhuurderschap)

²²

https://cor.europa.eu/en/events/Pages/eurocities-housing-europe-affordable-housing.aspx?utm_source=emailR&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=European+Affordable+Housing+Co+%5b22538%5d

