



**Spring 2025**

**◆◆◆ IUT contributions to expert meetings in the EP, HOUS, IMCO, COR, EESC ◆◆◆**



**IUT President Marie Linder at the expert hearing on affordable housing in the European Parliament**



On the 24<sup>th</sup> of March, at the European Parliament, a conference<sup>1</sup> co-organised by the European Commission Housing Taskforce and the Special Committee on the Housing Crisis in

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[https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/webstreaming/hous-committee-meeting\\_20250324-1500-COMMITTEE-HOUS](https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/webstreaming/hous-committee-meeting_20250324-1500-COMMITTEE-HOUS)

the EU (HOUS), raised several key discussions focused on addressing the housing crisis, with particular attention given to the needs of tenants and the role of financialization, with the participation of Commissioner for Housing **Dan Jørgensen** and the Chair of the HOUS committee **Irene Tinagli** (S&D – IT) and other MEPs and different Stakeholders.

**Marie Linder**, President of the International Union of Tenants (IUT), was a prominent voice in advocating for stronger regulation and tenant protections. She underscored the importance of treating housing as a right, not a commodity, and called for the establishment of a transparency register for real estate transactions to combat speculation and financialization. She argued that without such regulation, housing will continue to be driven by profit rather than the need for affordable living spaces.

Linder also highlighted the need for rent stabilization measures across Europe,

emphasizing the need for public and social housing. She proposed that each EU country should set a 30% quota for social and affordable housing, drawing on examples from Austria and Sweden. This, she argued, would help ensure that housing remains accessible to all, especially those who spend more than 20% of their disposable income on rent. She also stressed the importance of long-term rental contracts to secure stability for tenants.

The discussions also covered broader EU efforts to support affordable housing, with Dan Jørgensen responding to questions about the impact of short-term rentals (STR) and housing shortages. Jørgensen acknowledged that while regulations could help mitigate the effects of STRs, the main responsibility for regulation lies with national and local authorities, with the EU providing support.

Other key points raised during the dialogue included the need for faster permitting processes for construction, better access to materials, and greater innovation in building techniques. The role of financial solutions, particularly the European Investment Bank's (EIB) new financing opportunities, was also discussed to support housing projects, although experts like Bent Madsen from Housing Europe cautioned that funding systems must be stable and designed to protect social housing.

Marie Linder's call for a comprehensive approach to affordable housing, that includes rent control, long-term contracts, and stronger regulatory measures, resonated throughout the session. Her focus on the need for transparency and regulation to prevent real estate from becoming a speculative asset was central to the broader conversation about the future of housing in Europe.

## IUT at EESC Civil Society Week: Towards More Affordable, Democratic and Sustainable Housing



On Wednesday, March 19th, the Civil Society Week at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) hosted a workshop<sup>2</sup> focusing on the housing crisis in Europe. The session was moderated by Mathilde Delabie from Cooperatives Europe and featured a distinguished panel of experts including MEP **Leila Chaibi**, **Baiba Miltoviča**, and representatives from EESC, ALDA, IUT, ESCHA, and GCE.

**Baiba Miltoviča**, President of the TEN section at EESC, highlighted the widespread housing challenges in Europe, affecting not just vulnerable groups but also average citizens. Key issues include rising housing prices, demand-supply imbalances, speculative investments, and stagnant wages, with students particularly impacted by inadequately regulated short-term rentals. Miltoviča called for a civil society push and proposed an annual EU housing summit to unite stakeholders. She also emphasized ongoing EESC efforts on social housing frameworks, improved data, and land-use planning, alongside initiatives to combat

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<sup>2</sup> [https://youtu.be/k0o\\_ie9nyQc](https://youtu.be/k0o_ie9nyQc)

homelessness and promote energy-efficient building practices.

Member of the European Parliament **Leila Chaibi** for the Left underlined the key problems that are currently affecting EU Housing market. Financialisation, Short-Term-Rentals, State-aid rules, and the role of the new Special Committee in this mandate. Chaibi also stressed the importance of the participation of civil society organizations and citizens in the decision-making and legislative process, to make the EU lawmakers more aware of citizens' need.

**Maite Arrondo**, from ALDA, addressed the financialization of housing, where large investors treat homes as commodities, contributing to a 7% rise in homelessness in the EU. She called for rent regulation, taxation on vacant homes, and stricter oversight of housing ownership to prioritize affordable housing and correct market imbalances.

**Telma Abreu** from the European Student Cooperative Housing Alliance (ESCHA) showcased cooperative housing as a sustainable model, where profits are reinvested into maintenance and renovation. Abreu stressed the importance of community-driven solutions, where residents play an active role in managing their living spaces.

**Emiliano Rocchetti**, policy officer of the International Union of Tenants, outlined the damaging effects of profit-driven housing markets. He proposed a dual approach to combating the issue: offensive and defensive strategies. Offensively, he argued that homes should be for people, not for profit, and emphasized the need for strong tenant protections and rent stabilization mechanisms. Defensively, he pointed out that although some argue that investment in housing is beneficial, deregulated markets—like those in Ireland—often exacerbate the problem by making housing more expensive and

inaccessible to the general population. He also advocated for more social, public, and affordable housing to counteract the influence of large investors.

**Chiara Amici**, from Generation Climate Europe, highlighted the particular challenges faced by youth in securing affordable and sustainable housing. Many young people are forced to rent in older, inefficient buildings with high living costs and often engage in short-term rental agreements. To break this cycle, Amici called for a focus on creating more sustainable housing options, which would benefit both the environment and future generations.

## **HOUS - Special Committee on the Housing Crisis in the European Union – Meeting with Commissioner Dan Jørgensen**

On March 20, 2025, the Special Committee on the Housing Crisis in the European Union convened<sup>3</sup> to address key challenges and solutions for the housing crisis. **Chair Irene Tinagli** welcomed Commissioner Dan Jørgensen, emphasizing the urgency of the issue. The meeting highlighted the connection between energy efficiency and housing, and the importance of cooperation between the European Parliament and Commission to implement the EU Affordable Housing Plan.

**Commissioner Jørgensen** outlined the housing crisis, noting rising rents, house prices, and the social impact on key workers. He confirmed that €21.3 billion from the Recovery and Resilience Facility has been earmarked for

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20250228IPR27125/special-committee-on-the-housing-crisis-in-the-european-union>

housing reforms, with plans to increase public-private investments through the EU platform and the European Investment Bank (EIB). Jorgensen also discussed measures to address short-term rentals (STRs) and proposed revising state-aid rules to enhance affordable housing investments.

During the rounds of questions many MEPs intervened. **Nikolina Brnjac (EPP – HR)** raised concerns about energy efficiency requirements and their impact on affordability, suggesting an immediate review of related regulations. She also asked about proposals to regulate STRs. **Gabriele Bischoff (S&Ds – DE)** questioned whether the Commission had sufficient data on STRs and highlighted concerns about state-aid rules, particularly regarding restrictions on cities trying to control STRs. **Ciaran Mullooly (RE – IE)** inquired about the Pan-European investment platform for affordable housing and how it would attract more public and private financing. He also suggested reforming Ireland’s social housing fund. **Maria Ohisalo (G/EFA – FI)** focused on financialization in the housing market, asking about cooperation with the Commissioner for Financial Services to ensure the Affordable Housing Plan addresses financial issues. **Leila Chaibi (Left – FR)** asked about a concrete legislative initiative on STRs and proposed creating a transparency register for real estate transactions. **Dirk Gotink (EPP – NL)** questioned the EU’s role in addressing housing shortages, suggesting that permitting procedures in densely populated areas need simplification. **Vicent Marzá (G/EFA – ES)** asked about potential measures like taxes or rent caps to improve housing affordability, and whether public investments could be excluded from the Stability Pact rules. **Irene Tinagli** concluded by stressing the importance of a clear framework and comprehensive analysis to address the housing crisis effectively.

## IUT at CoR high Level session: The Role of Cities and Regions in the EU Affordable Housing Plan

On the 21 of January 2025 the European Committee of the Regions convened a high-level session on affordable housing<sup>4</sup>, emphasizing the role of cities and regions in tackling housing challenges. The discussion brought together stakeholders from local governments, housing organizations, and the European Investment Bank (EIB) to explore regulatory reforms, investment strategies, and multi-level governance approaches.

**Jaume Collboni**, Mayor of Barcelona, highlighted housing as the top concern for the city’s government and residents. He warned that soaring housing prices and the lack of affordability were fuelling social and ecological crises and contributing to the rise of far-right movements. Barcelona has implemented measures such as rent caps and a ban on new tourist accommodation licenses by 2028 to stabilize the market. Collboni called for increased collaboration between EU institutions and local governments to keep housing at the top of the EU agenda, stressing the need for regulations to curb speculation and limit short-term rentals. He also urged increased investment in affordable housing and reforms in state-aid rules to broaden access to social housing.

**Barbara Steenbergen** from the International Union of Tenants (IUT) called for increased EU funding for social and affordable housing providers and non-profit solutions. She urged reforms in public procurement rules to better protect tenants and called for transparency measures requiring rental platforms to publish

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<sup>4</sup> <https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions/cdr-0042-2025>

previous rental prices. Steenbergen criticized the lack of regulations on excessive rents, leaving tenants vulnerable to market abuses. She also highlighted the issue of "renovictions," where tenants are displaced due to renovation-related rent hikes and called for stronger safeguards in EU housing policies. She referenced Article 17 of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, advocating for "housing cost neutrality," ensuring that any rent increases following renovations are offset by energy savings. She also warned against the financialization of the housing market, urging the EIB to prioritize funding for not-for-profit housing providers to stabilize rental markets and curb speculative price increases.

**Sorcha Edwards** of Housing Europe recognized Barcelona as a model for other cities in addressing housing challenges. She emphasized the need to double cohesion funds for housing and energy efficiency and ensure that regional and local authorities can effectively access these funds. She also stressed the importance of directing EIB investment funds toward low- and middle-income groups and combating homelessness.

**Andres Jaadla** from the Committee of the Regions stressed the need to integrate energy and housing policies in the EU Affordable Housing Plan. He underscored the importance of renovating older buildings and ensuring that local authorities play a central role in shaping future EU housing policies.

**Bianca Faragau** from the EIB outlined key investment priorities, including increasing the supply of affordable and sustainable housing, promoting construction sector innovation, and addressing financial and regulatory barriers. She proposed expanding InvestEU and Cohesion Funds to strengthen affordable housing initiatives. Faragau emphasized treating housing debt as an investment rather than a cost to create more fiscal space for municipalities. She also announced a joint

partnership between the European Commission and the EIB to develop housing investment strategies.

**Alison Gilliland** from Dublin City Council voiced concerns about isolating affordable and social housing in policy discussions. She stressed the need for conditionalities in state-aid rules to ensure fair housing access and balance affordability with long-term sustainability.

## IUT at EP IMCO Committee - Public Hearing on Housing Rentals in the Internal Market and Protection of Consumers



On February 18<sup>th</sup> the European Parliament's Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) Committee held a public hearing on housing rentals<sup>5</sup>, addressing market challenges and consumer protection. The discussion featured key figures from local governments, industry organizations, and academia.

During the first Panel on the current framework and challenges in the housing rental market, **Jaume Collboni**, Mayor of Barcelona, stressed the need for a permanent dialogue between the European Commission

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[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2024\\_2029/plmrep/COMMITTEES/IMCO/DV/2025/02-17/FinalProgramme\\_Housingrentals\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2024_2029/plmrep/COMMITTEES/IMCO/DV/2025/02-17/FinalProgramme_Housingrentals_EN.pdf)

and cities to ensure fair housing policies. He highlighted Barcelona's measures to counter speculation and protect affordability, including rent regulations, a decision to convert 10,000 short-term rental units into long-term housing, and the expansion of new construction. He advocated for European minimum standards to ensure that rent increases do not exceed 3% of wage growth. **Sorcha Edwards**, Secretary General of Housing Europe, emphasized that EU funding should prioritize non-profit, limited profit, and cooperative housing providers. She called for stronger consumer protections against predatory investment, stricter regulation of short-term rental platforms, and investment in public and cooperative housing instead of financialized real estate. The European Commission, represented by **Amaryllis Verhoeven** and **Katharina Knapton-Vierlich** from DG GROW, outlined new short-term rental regulations, set for implementation by May 2026. These include transparency requirements for rental platforms, measures to ensure proper taxation, and ongoing discussions with cities on further regulatory needs, particularly regarding tourism impacts. **Claire Colomb**, Professor of Land Economy at the University of Cambridge, noted the diversity of rental regulations across the EU and the overlap between short-term and long-term rental markets. She stressed the need for clear policies to differentiate the two and prevent their harmful effects on affordability. Several MEPs contributed to the discussion. **Kim Van Sparrentak** (G/EFA – NL) questioned Madrid's short-term rental rules, arguing they could worsen housing shortages. **Leila Chaibi** (Left – FR) emphasized increasing housing supply over evictions. **Brando Benifei** (S&Ds – IT) highlighted the student housing crisis in Italy, calling for regulatory simplifications to make better use of existing housing stock.

During the second panel which offered several stakeholders' perspectives. **Mark Boekwijt**

from the European Cities Alliance on Short-Term Rentals countered that housing stock should prioritize residents over profit. He pointed to a European Court of Justice ruling affirming that limits on short-term rentals are justified when necessary to protect housing availability.

**Barbara Steenbergen**, Head of the EU Liaison Office at the International Union of Tenants (IUT), warned that short-term rentals are fuelling gentrification, displacement, and rising rents. She cited Eurostat data showing a 22% rent increase since 2010, with inflation at 36%, putting severe pressure on tenants. She called for fair rental agreements as part of consumer protection, strict regulations to prevent the conversion of regular rental housing into short-term rentals, and greater transparency through mandatory rental cadastres and an EU wide real estate transaction transparency register to combat tax evasion, market abuse and money laundering. She urged the EU to implement market surveillance measures as part of the next Consumer Agenda (2025-2030) to prevent housing speculation. MEPs **Gordan Bosanac** (G/EFA – HR) and **Dirk Gotink** (EPP – NL) emphasized the need for better housing data and highlighted the EU's indirect influence on housing policies despite subsidiarity concerns. **Steenbergen** responded that immediate action is needed, using existing data rather than delaying further studies. She reiterated the urgency of enforcing tenant protections and including housing market surveillance in the EU consumer agenda.

## **IUT's Barbara Steenbergen Interview on Short Term Rentals in Deutschlandradio**

**Barbara Steenbergen** was interviewed by Deutschlandradio<sup>6</sup> about the current and planned legal changes to short-term rental platforms:

It's about the difference between occasional and professional landlords and how to verify it. The problem is: So far, this data is often missing. The EU now wants to change that. From May 2026, an EU regulation is to ensure greater transparency: providers such as Airbnb or Booking.com will in future have to share more data with local authorities, including the exact address of the advertised apartment. And: Anyone who advertises an apartment on the platforms, for example, needs a registration number. 'I think it's a good start, says Barbara Steenbergen, who heads the International Union of Tenants' liaison office in Brussels. She says many cities have been pushing for a European regulation that makes it easier for them to act against illegal offers. For example, if it is stipulated that in certain neighbourhoods there may be no short-term rentals at all or only for a limited period. Then the cities should be able to check this more easily in the future. Steenbergen criticises the fact that the online platforms often did not release the data for this:

"The cities never had access to the data. Now we have turned the whole thing around: the cities no longer have to chase up the data from illegal landlords: they may have to send officials out onto the streets to check whether short-term rentals are taking place." It's a start – to be continued with the European legislators.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/airbnb-und-co-ferienwohnung-mit-nebenwirkungen-100.html>

## **EPC Policy Dialogue - Investment in Social and Affordable Housing**

On February 25th, at the European Policy Centre, IUT was invited on a meeting on investment in social and affordable housing.

Matthew Baldwin, deputy director general DG ENER of the European Commission and head of the new Housing Taskforce, addressed the long-standing housing crisis, stressing that action is needed rather than waiting for a "messiah." He described the issue as a short-term crisis with long-term implications, advocating for a measured yet proactive approach. Baldwin highlighted the supply-demand crunch and the lack of representation for those affected. He emphasized the European Commission's commitment to addressing this issue and praised the establishment of a taskforce to combat financial speculation in housing.

## **IUT at CoR: Forum pour l'Avenir Franco Allemand presenting best practices to EU stakeholders**



On March 26, 2025, the Forum pour l'avenir Franco-Allemand organized an event at the European Committee of the Regions to discuss how energy-efficient building renovations can

help address Europe's housing crisis<sup>7</sup>. The forum, backed by the French and German governments, emphasized the need for socially just energy renovations to reduce costs and increase the supply of affordable housing. The focus was on integrating local strategies into EU policies, sharing best practices, and ensuring effective implementation. During the discussion, **Serena Pontoglio** from DG ENER stressed the importance of learning from existing local initiatives, pointing out that energy renovations of old buildings could alleviate housing shortages. She highlighted the need for cooperation between national and local authorities in implementing the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD), with EU funds supporting the process. **Ciaran Cuffe, former MEP from Ireland and chair of the European Green Party**, highlighted the EPBD's social safeguards, particularly protecting vulnerable tenants from rent increases and renoventions. He stressed the importance of integrating local experiences, like One-Stop-Shops, into EU strategies. **Barbara Steenbergen, International Union of Tenants and appointed expert of the Forum pour l'Avenir Franco-Allemand** raised concerns about the impact of energy renovations on tenants, particularly due to rent increases. She highlighted that in cities like Bonn, rents have risen exorbitantly over the past decade, and renovation costs have exacerbated this. Steenbergen called for a bottom-up approach to housing policy, ensuring that tenants are protected from renoventions and rent hikes during energy upgrades. She underlined that the EPBD includes social safeguards for tenants which must be implemented at national level by 2026. She also pointed out that many buildings are uninhabitable without

<sup>7</sup> <https://forumpourlavenir.eu/actualite/renover-logements-abordables-en-europe-soutenir-apprendre-initiatives-locales>

renovation, citing Chemnitz quarter Brühl as an example of successful integrated revitalization and renovation. Steenbergen advocated for One-Stop-Shops as a helpful model.

## Visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing in Vienna



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On 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of March, **Balakrishnan Rajagopal, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing**, visited Vienna and the **Mietervereinigung Österreichs**<sup>8</sup> to explore the city's renowned social housing model<sup>9</sup>.

During his visit, Rajagopal was particularly impressed by the long-standing tradition of social housing in Vienna, dating back over a century to the "Red Vienna" era. He highlighted the city's unique ability to remove land from speculative markets, which he believes is crucial for ensuring affordable housing. He noted that while different forms of housing—both public and private—can coexist, securing land from speculation is essential to making affordable housing viable. Rajagopal compared Vienna's approach with his home country, the United States, where the dominance of single-family homes makes

<sup>8</sup>

<https://www.facebook.com/MVOE.Mietervereinigung.Oesterreichs>

<sup>9</sup>

<https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000261075/warum-der-un-sonderberichterstatter-fuer-wohnen-auf-besuch-in-wien-war>



it nearly impossible for the public sector to intervene in land markets.

Rajagopal also emphasized that Vienna's institutional and legal mechanisms, which allow the city to set its own laws on housing and social housing income limits, are key to its success. These systems help create mixed-income housing, avoiding the stigmatization of social housing seen in other countries. He criticized the U.S. approach under Donald Trump, which he believes exacerbates housing issues by making construction more expensive through tariffs and immigration policies.

Furthermore, Rajagopal discussed the impact of war on housing, particularly in conflict zones like Gaza and Ukraine, stressing the moral obligation to rebuild after such destruction. He suggested that cooperative models, like Vienna's, could play a key role in the reconstruction of war-torn areas, although he cautioned against the mistakes made during past rebuilding efforts, like in Beirut.

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