

Summer 2025

IUT Board Meeting in Dublin



Marie Linder at the Hearing: "Housing Rights, Property Rights and Tenant Protections: Addressing Evictions and Homelessness".



On 25 June 2025, the European Parliament hosted a joint hearing of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) and the Special Committee on the Housing Crisis (HOUS), addressing the theme: *"Housing Rights, Property Rights and Tenant Protections: Addressing Evictions and Homelessness."*¹ The

https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/webstrea ming/empl-committee-meeting 20250625-1100-COMMITTEE-EMPL

1

session brought together housing advocates, legal experts, and property sector representatives to discuss the deepening housing challenges across the EU.

Marie Linder, President of the International Union of Tenants (IUT), stressed that housing should be treated as a human right, not a commodity. "Housing is not just a roof over your head, it's the foundation of dignity, security and opportunity," she stated. "Housing is not a commodity, it is a human right, and it is under threat in many Member States across the EU." She warned that rising evictions are not inevitable, but reflect policy choices and structural issues, including the financialisation of housing, unaffordable rents, and tenure insecurity. "Evictions are not an act of nature, they are the result of policy choices," she said, calling for a shift from reactive to preventive policies, with stronger protections against arbitrary evictions, indefinite rental contracts, and increased supply of affordable housing. The IUT's position, she noted, is grounded in a human rights-based approach that prioritises people over profit.

Ruth Owen of FEANTSA underlined the need for a common EU definition of homelessness and emphasized that social housing must play a key role in addressing housing exclusion. Professor **Padraic Kenna** called for minimum EU-wide protections against evictions and stronger legal recognition of the right to housing, particularly through consumer protection standards.

The hearing concluded with remarks from Matthew Baldwin, Head of the European Commission's Task Force on Housing, who acknowledged the broad range of views presented and the need for coordinated but balanced policy responses at EU level.

Seminar on rent regulation, rent stabilisation and rent control in Europe at the ISHF



Organized by the International Union of Tenants (IUT), this seminar brought together key political figures, legal experts, and tenant advocates to discuss the state and future of rent regulation in Europe. The session² was introduced by **Emiliano Rocchetti** (IUT), who explained the seminar's relevance within IUT's mission and the EqualHouse initiative. Moderated by **Laura Colini** from the University of Venice, the panel opened by framing the discussion within the broader housing crisis and ongoing "polycrisis" affecting Europe. She reminded the audience that rent controls, especially when combined with public housing, have played a critical role in reducing inequality and can do so again if boldly implemented.

The first speaker, **Rory Hearne**, Social Democrats member of parliament for Dublin North-West and long-time housing scholar and activist, presented the Irish case. He criticized loopholes in Ireland's rent pressure zones, where nominal 2% rent caps are undermined by decontrol between tenancies. Hearne highlighted the failure to protect renters from market volatility, particularly young people, and warned of the government's ongoing shift toward vulture fund reliance. He called for stronger, multi-scalar regulation and a political vision that sees housing as a human right, not a speculative asset.

Next, Mar Jiménez, Commissioner for European Affairs at Barcelona City Council, reflected on Barcelona and Catalonia's efforts to define "rent pressure zones" and push for stronger urban cohesion policies at EU level. She explained the political challenges faced in maintaining Catalonia's 2020 rent control law, struck down at national level, and advocated for EU-level recognition of cities as actors in housing governance. While she championed the use of cohesion funds in high-pressure urban areas, there was a call from the audience to go further: to pair this recognition with firm rent control and freezes in designated zones, not just funding requests.

Zeno Winkels, Director of the Dutch Tenants' Union, outlined the Dutch regulatory landscape, where both the social and private rental sectors are governed by rent controls

² <u>https://www.iut.nu/news-events/seminar-rent-regulation-stabilisation-and-control-in-europe/</u>

and a points-based system. He explained the recent Good Landlordship Act, which offers legal protection against abusive practices by landlords, rental agents, and even employers housing migrant workers. Winkels emphasized that tenant protections must evolve to address market abuses at every stage of the rental process—from search to occupancy.

Representing Eastern Europe, **Lenka Veselá**, Chairwoman of the Czech Tenants' Association (SON), brought forward the Czech experience. As a legal advocate and housing rights defender, she stressed the importance of tenant representation in courts and highlighted the Czech Republic's potential role as a pilot country for rent control policies in Eastern Europe. She encouraged greater exchange between Western and Eastern European housing models, positioning the Czech context as a testing ground for adaptable rent regulation strategies.

Closing the session, **Barbara Steenbergen** (Head of EU Liaison, IUT) delivered a strong reflection on the way forward. She emphasized that rent regulation is no longer a fringe topic, but a central issue of social justice and economic stability in Europe.

IUT delegation at the 2025 Deutscher Mietertag



At the 71st German Tenants' Day (Deutscher Mietertag) held in Rostock-Warnemünde, the **Deutscher Mieterbund (DMB)** elected **Dr. Melanie Weber-Moritz** as its new president. She succeeds **Lukas Siebenkotten**, who is retiring after nearly 18 years of dedicated service and leadership at the helm of the organization.

The International Union of Tenants (IUT), represented by President Marie Linder, along with Dan Nicander, Barbara Steenbergen, and Johan Mirtorp, attended the congress and extended their heartfelt gratitude to Lukas Siebenkotten. His outstanding commitment to tenants' rights and his role on the IUT Board were recognized as pivotal in strengthening tenant protections both nationally and internationally. In her address to the congress, IUT President Marie Linder emphasized that "Housing is not a commodity!" and reaffirmed the founding mission of the IUT: to enforce the right to housing as a human right. Her speech was warmly received by attendees. The DMB congress, taking place from Wednesday to Friday, brought together approximately 400 representatives from local tenant associations and regional branches. The IUT looks forward to continued and strengthened cooperation with DMB under the leadership of Dr. Weber-Moritz, especially in addressing pressing housing issues on an international scale.

Reality Check Meeting on State Aid Rules for Affordable Housing

On July 10th the European Commission's Directorate-General for Competition (DG COMP) held a high-level meeting titled at the Conference Centre Albert Borschette in Brussels. The event brought together key stakeholders to discuss the Commission's proposed revision of State aid rules under the Services of General Economic Interest (SGEI)³ framework, with the goal of improving access to affordable housing across the EU.

³ <u>Revision of State aid rules for affordable housing</u>

The International Union of Tenants (IUT) was represented by Barbara Steenbergen and Zeno Winkels, who voiced the concerns of Europe's tenants and presented IUT's position on the urgent need for reform. They argued that the current definition of eligible target groups under the SGEI rules is too narrow, excluding many middle-income households and key workers who are increasingly unable to afford housing in urban areas. IUT stressed that housing must be treated as a fundamental right and a public good, not merely a market commodity, and that Member States must be empowered to invest in broader and more inclusive public housing solutions. This meeting is part of the broader public consultation process launched bv the European Commission, which remains open until 31 July 2025. The consultation invites feedback on how to adapt State aid rules to the realities of today's housing crisis and to help bridge the investment gap in affordable housing. The IUT will continue to engage actively with the Commission to ensure that tenant voices are heard and reflected in the final revision of the rules.

IUT Delegation Visit to Italian Member Organisations



On the 1st and 2nd of July 2025, an International Union of Tenants (IUT) delegation made an official visit to Italy to meet with our four national member organisations: **SUNIA**, **SICET, UNIAT**, and **Feder-Casa**. The delegation was composed of IUT President **Marie Linder**, alongside secretary-general **Dan Nicander** and **Emiliano Rocchetti** from IUT Brussels Office. Over two days, we held a series of constructive meetings that provided valuable insights into the housing realities currently facing tenants across Italy.

The discussions were open, informative, and deeply engaged with the structural and social challenges that define the housing landscape in Italy today. A shared concern voiced by all organisations was the chronic shortage of social, public, and genuinely affordable housing; the gaps in the protection of tenants' rights, including insufficient rent regulation, inadequate support during evictions, and limited enforcement of housing quality standards.

These issues are emblematic of broader housing challenges facing Europe as a whole. However, the Italian context, marked by decades of underinvestment in the public housing sector and a persistent lack of political prioritisation, makes them particularly acute.

The IUT reaffirmed its commitment to supporting its Italian member organisations in their national and local advocacy efforts and represent their voice at the European and international level.

Public Hearing on State-aid and Affordable Housing

On April 7, 2025, the European Parliament's Special Committee on the Housing Crisis held a public hearing to assess how EU state aid rules affect affordable housing. Vice Chair **Damian Boeselager** highlighted that since 2010, EU house prices have risen by 47% and rents by 18%, disproportionately impacting low- and middle-income households and eroding trust in public institutions.

Karl Soukup, Deputy Director-General of DG Competition, explained that while social housing benefits from broad exemptions, affordable housing is constrained by a €15 million annual limit. The Commission plans to revise the rules, introducing a specific category for affordable housing and expanding exemptions to speed up implementation. A public consultation will be launched before summer.

Experts called for long-term solutions. Professor **Marja Elsinga** advocated for cooperative and nonprofit housing models to ensure lasting affordability. **Stefan Ripka** from the Czech Republic proposed amending the General Block Exemption Regulation to ease funding for affordable rentals. **Carlos Donat Muñoz** highlighted severe rental shortages in urban Spain and urged more local authority autonomy.

MEPs voiced strong support for reform, criticizing bureaucratic delays and calling for faster, more flexible rules that protect public investments. Soukup concluded that the upcoming revisions aim to empower member states while ensuring responsible use of public funds, with implementation details left to national authorities.

Exchange on Housing Crisis and challenges - European Urban Forum



On April 8, 2025, the European Urban Forum gathered housing experts, policymakers, and institutional leaders to address key structural challenges behind Europe's housing crisis, with a focus on affordability, governance, financing, and tenant protection. Ana Claudia Rossbach (UN-Habitat) emphasized that the housing crisis is global, not just European, driven by affordability issues, homelessness, conflicts, and land scarcity. She called for integrated housing support and multi-level governance to manage land use, urban density, and the allocation of vacant buildings. A shift toward community-led models, like incremental housing and secondunit developments, was encouraged.

Matthew Baldwin (European Commission) stressed that both supply and policy failures are impacting vulnerable populations, especially youth. He underlined the importance of city leadership and the Commission's consultation process with 50 cities to gather and scale best practices.

Gerry Muscat (European Investment Bank) presented the EIB's housing strategy focused on innovation, sustainability, and affordability. The EIB finances €3 billion per year in housing and supports cities with advisory tools and a new one-stop-shops web portal to unlock scalable financing models.

Marcos Ros Sempere (European Parliament) advocated for using Cohesion Funds beyond just social housing and renovations. He urged that affordable housing become a standalone objective under the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), with clearer definitions and dedicated funding to nonprofit and public providers.

In the second panel, **Ruth Owen** (FEANTSA) urged stronger focus on homelessness and lowincome households, warning that middleincome stress should not eclipse support for the most vulnerable. She called for more funding for programs like Housing First.

Barbara Steenbergen (Head of IUT Brussels) delivered a strong call for tenant protections and strict conditions on public funding; she proposed two concrete actions: **cutting rent prices by 50%** and **introducing unlimited rental** **contracts**. Steenbergen highlighted that tenants in Europe's private rental market face little protection, with soaring rents and few rights. She demanded **clear conditionalities** for any EU funding—**no money** should go to projects lacking tenant protections or long-term affordability guarantees.

She warned that without proper safeguards, funds risk fuelling **financialization** and empowering large institutional landlords. Steenbergen called for a **transparency register of real estate ownership**, aligned with OECD recommendations, to expose market concentration and ensure accountability.

ERHIN Awards Jury Meeting in Brussels – 10 April



The European Responsible Housing Awards (ERHA) 2025 proudly unveiled the shortlist of 25 finalists during a jury meeting held on April 10th at the Vienna House in Brussels⁴. The Awards, jointly organized by the International Union of Tenants (IUT) and Housing Europe, with the support of DELPHIS, celebrate excellence in affordable, inclusive, and sustainable housing across Europe.

The jury, composed of housing experts, tenant advocates, academics, and representatives from EU institutions, reviewed a wide pool of innovative applications before selecting the final shortlist. Jury members included: Anne Viita (Finnish Union of Tenants), Anne-Rita Andal (Norwegian Union of Tenants), Charlotte Limousin (DELPHIS), Eddie Jacquemart (French Union of Tenants), Eduardo Gonzalez de Molina Soler (Housing Policy Consultant), Gina Ding (RICS), Katarina Knapton-Vierlich (European Commission), Laura Colini (University of Venezia), Maja Staleska (North Macedonia Tenants Union), Marcos Ros Sempere (MEP, Spain), Marie Linder (President, IUT), Melanie Weber-Moritz (German Tenants Union), Michaela Kauer (City of Vienna), Zeno Winkels (Dutch Tenants Union) and Andrea Colantonio (European Investment Bank)

Barbara Steenbergen, Chair of the Jury (IUT), emphasized the Awards' impact:

"These are not just ideas—they are lived realities, shaped by the very tenants who experience them every day. Their insights are a powerful reality check, reminding us of the importance of designing with people, not just for them."

The 2025 Awards feature **five categories**, each reflecting core values of responsible housing: affordability, social inclusion, green innovation, community participation, and safe living environments. Finalist projects range from circular construction pilots and energy-efficient retrofits to community-led cooperatives and housing programs preventing evictions.

Zeno Winkels (Dutch Union of Tenants) noted, "The quality is higher than ever, projects not only address energy poverty but also push for circular construction, community-building, and safeguarding space for vulnerable groups."

Marcos Ros Sempere, MEP and jury member, added, "We've seen incredible innovation, from cooperatives to community land trusts to limited-profit models. These finalists are

⁴ <u>https://www.iut.nu/news-events/the-european-</u> responsible-housing-awards-finalists/

showing us the future of affordable housing in Europe."

Michaela Kauer (Vienna House Brussels) concluded: "The European Responsible Housing Awards should inspire everyone, especially the EU, as they shape future housing policy."

The Winners have been announced on the 5th of June during the ERHIN Awards Ceremony in Dublin. A big thank you to Daniele Zurigo for taking care of the organisation of the event.

Barbara Steenbergen at City Conference: Housing Markets in Europe Under Pressure



On May 6, 2025, the Vienna Chamber of Labour hosted a full-day city conference titled "Housing Markets in Europe Under Pressure." ⁵

The international audience included around 300 participants. The main focus was the increasing financialization of housing markets, the consequences of which are clearly felt, especially by tenants: affordability, accessibility, and stability are increasingly at risk. In recent years, affordable housing has become a key voting issue, particularly in major European cities.

The keynote speech by **Anacláudia Rossbach**, Executive Director of UN-Habitat, provided a global perspective on the challenges facing

5

housing markets in cities worldwide. **Barbara Steenbergen** from the International Union of Tenants highlighted the European viewpoint and explained the most important aspects from the tenants' perspective for the first European Affordable Housing Plan, which is currently in development.

European Parliament – Addressing Short-Term Rentals: From Cities to the EU

On the 14th of May a high-level meeting in Brussels, EU and city representatives discussed the growing impact of short-term rentals (STRs) on Europe's housing crisis. The event took place ahead of the first EU regulation on STRs, set to take effect in May 2026, as part of the EU Affordable Housing Plan. The regulation will improve data transparency and support member states and cities in developing appropriate measures. A call for evidence is open until 4 June, with a public consultation running until mid-October.

City representatives from Barcelona, Paris, and Dublin shared local approaches. Barcelona reported reclaiming over 3,000 apartments in the past year through strong enforcement. A new Catalan law and urban plan aim to eliminate 10,000 tourist apartments by 2028. In Paris, officials highlighted that while nearly 300,000 people wait for social housing, a similar number of apartments remain empty. New local rules cap STRs at 90 days and require special authorisation for secondary residences, with financial compensation to neighbourhoods. Dublin has required STR registration and authorisation since 2019 but noted its limited enforcement powers compared to other cities.

https://wien.arbeiterkammer.at/interessenvertretung /meinestadt/veranstaltungen/Wohnungsmaerkteunter-Druck.html

All cities welcomed the EU regulation but called for stronger enforcement mechanisms and EU support for local rules. They stressed that housing must be treated as a public good, not a commodity.

In the European debate, Members of the European Parliament underlined that STRs are reducing housing availability and driving up prices. They called for urgent regulatory action, better funding for public and affordable housing, and clearer legal tools for cities. Proposals in the REGI Committee aim to revise Cohesion Policy to allow more investment in affordable housing, including clearer definitions and reprogramming of funds.

There was broad agreement that STR regulation must go beyond transparency to support concrete action empowering cities, restoring housing availability, and protecting affordability for residents across Europe.

Emiliano Rocchetti at SUNIA Roundtable on the right to housing in Rome



On the 19th of May the **Sindacato Unitario Nazionale Inquilini e Assegnatari (SUNIA)** organised a roundtable, held under the title *"For a Europe of Rights: A Discussion on the Right to Housing"*.<⁶ The event provided a platform to reflect deeply on the current housing emergency facing many European countries, reaffirming the urgency of addressing this challenge as a fundamental question of rights and dignity.

The session opened with an introduction by Cristina Piastrelli, National Secretary of SUNIA, who set the tone by underlining the structural nature of the housing crisis. The discussion was moderated by Antonio Sciotto, journalist with RAI Parlamento, and brought together a diverse panel. Participants included Daniela Barbaresi, National Secretary of CGIL; Damiano Di Giovanni, national representative of UDU; Pierfrancesco Maran, Member of the European Parliament with the S&D Group; Giusi Milazzo, National Secretary of SUNIA; Tania Scacchetti, General Secretary of SPI CGIL; Luca Talluri, Deputy Vice President of Federcasa; Irene Tinagli, Member of the European Parliament and Chair of the Special Committee on the Housing Crisis; Tobia Zevi, Councillor for Housing Policy of the City of Rome; and Emiliano Rocchetti, policy officer at the IUT. Each of them brought valuable contributions, grounded in their respective areas of expertise, and enriched the conversation with both political and social perspectives.

The roundtable concluded with remarks from **Stefano Chiappelli**, General Secretary of SUNIA, who emphasized the need for continued collaboration and collective action. He called for a renewed commitment to putting housing rights at the center of European policy, affirming that only through coordinated efforts at all levels, local, national, and European, can address the housing crisis in a meaningful and lasting way.

⁶ <u>https://www.cgil.it/ci-occupiamo-di/sviluppo-urbano-e-politiche-abitative/per-uneuropa-dei-</u>diritti-un-confronto-sul-diritto-allabitare-a2xwzkny

Crisis de la Vivienda en Europa – de la denuncia a la acción



On the 20th of May the European Parliament hosted the event *"Housing Crisis in Europe: From Outcry to Action"*, organised by the the G/EFA and the LEFT, where MEPs, city leaders, social movements, and housing experts gathered to confront the deepening housing emergency across Europe. Opening remarks from **Estrella Galán** (The Left), **Jaume Asens Llodrà**, and **Vicent Marzà Ibánez** (both Greens/EFA) emphasized the need for coordinated EU action to defend housing as a fundamental right.

The first panel focused on municipal experiences. Estrella Galán highlighted Madrid's housing struggle, where 40% of families cannot afford rent due to speculation. Rita Maestre, Madrid councillor, stressed the need for regulation of short-term rentals and tax reform to promote affordable housing. Joan Ribó, former Valencia mayor, spoke about and rising evictions promoted intergenerational housing and stronger ties with social movements. Toni Morillas (Málaga) warned of the feminized impact of the crisis and called for restrictions on tourist housing. Ada Colau, former Barcelona mayor, drew on her activist background to underline the importance of local governments and social movements in resisting speculation, stopping evictions, and scaling up cooperative housing models.

In the second panel, **Luis Manuel Sanmartín Cava** (PAH Barcelona) called for public housing, fiscal reform, and EU-level resistance to conservative forces blocking housing reform. Laura Barrio Recio (Usera Housing Assembly) emphasized the need for gendered and sociological approaches to housing policy. Barbara Steenbergen from the International Union of Tenants (IUT) gave a standout intervention, urging the EU to fight back against financialization and vulture funds. She called for a real estate transparency register, stricter rent regulation, and public oversight of housing finance. She stressed the need for coalitionbuilding across Europe and warned, "We must be ready to take to the streets. IUT is with you." Speakers from the Canary Islands and Valencia, Isabel Saavedra Domenech, Maria Alandés Esteve, spoke against unchecked tourism and neighborhood displacement. Mark Boekwijt (European Cities Alliance) pointed to urban limits on tourist rentals and stressed the need for pan-European cooperation.

In the final segment, Michaela Kauer, representing Vienna, explained the city's successful non-extractive housing model, built on constitutional obligations, a dedicated housing tax, and strong partnerships with cooperatives. Half of Vienna's population lives in municipal housing, a model she believes should inspire EU regulation. Pablo Bustinduy, Spain's Minister for Social Rights, closed by affirming that Spain's housing crisis was politically manufactured. He condemned real estate abuse and stressed the need to reclaim housing as a public good. Finally, Jaume Asens Llodrà called for hope and unity, warning against fear-driven politics and urging a renewed social Europe grounded in the right to housing.

Policy Session on Delivering the Social Climate and Building Renovation Plans at the EU Sustainable Energy Week



On the 12th of June at the Charlemagne building of the European Commission, during the EU Sustainable Energy Week, a policy session coorganised by Climate Action Network Europe, the European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network, and FEANTSA focused on how Social Climate Plans and Building Renovation Plans can work together to ensure an inclusive Renovation Wave that leaves no one behind. With deadlines approaching, the discussion emphasized embedding energy justice throughout the policy cycle, recognizing those facing energy poverty and housing insecurity, involving them in policymaking, and directing funds to correct past inequalities.

The session, moderated by **Eva Schwab** from FEANTSA, featured video testimonies from tenants in Germany living in poor conditions as corporate landlords invest only in profitable properties, and Roma homeowners in Slovakia who face exclusion from renovation funds due to informality and debt. These examples highlighted the urgent need to design policies that prevent worsening social exclusion amid rising energy costs.

Speakers stressed that structural barriers must be addressed now, before energy costs rise further due to ETS2. **Kinga Albert** from the Red Cross EU Office called for multidimensional measures combining renovation support with debt counselling. Emiliano Rocchetti from the International Union of Tenants insisted that EPBD implementation must prioritize the worst-performing homes while safeguarding tenant protections, especially those enshrined in Article 17 of the Directive. Javier Tobías González from ECODES emphasized better outreach to reach those currently "hard to reach." Eva Brardinelli from CAN Europe advocated for stronger links between Social Climate Plans and Renovation Plans. Daniel Grebeldinger from Nevo Parudimos Romania highlighted the need to include informal housing and those relying on firewood heating. Raluca Painter from the European Commission confirmed the need to realize Social Climate Fund targets in national plans.

EURHONET Leadership Summit 2025



The Leadership Summit opened with a dynamic panel discussion titled "Strengthening **Cooperation Between Cities and Social Housing** Providers," moderated by Ozgur Oner from GdW Bundesverband Wohnungswirtschaft. The session offered valuable insights into the critical role of collaboration in advancing sustainable, affordable housing policies across Europe. Stefan Moser from DG ENER's Task Force Housing at the European Commission emphasized the importance of maintaining a comprehensive view in policymaking. He highlighted housing providers as essential partners for municipalities and stressed the need for local and regional assessments to identify resources and craft tailored solutions. Mélanie Bourgeois of Energy Cities introduced the concept of sufficiency as a promising element for the EU Affordable Housing Plan. She advocated for maximizing existing resources, focusing on long-term development within current urban areas, and supporting innovative housing models like co-housing and home-swapping. Anna lafisco from Eurocities shared successful examples of collaboration, spotlighting Madrid's Orcasitas project. This initiative renovated over 100 buildings, reducing CO2 emissions by 58-70%, showcasing the power of bottom-up, citizen-driven approaches. Martina De Sole from the European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL) demonstrated how living labs serve as innovation ecosystems that place citizens at the heart of change, enabling adaptive and responsive housing solutions through ongoing feedback. Emiliano Rocchetti of the International Union of Tenants stressed the importance of tenant-centered decisionhighlighting the making, project Stockholmhusen, which recently received a Responsible Housing Award for its exemplary practices. Tatiana Marquez Uriarte from the European Commission reminded attendees that housing challenges differ across Member States, requiring policies tailored to both national and local contexts.

Acknowledgements



A heartfelt thank-you to **Daniele Zurigo**, who recently completed his traineeship with IUT. His dedication and work have been greatly appreciated, and we wish him all the best in his future professional and personal life.

© IUT liaison office to the EU

Barbara Steenbergen, Emiliano Rocchetti and Daniele Zurigo

More info:

Barbara Steenbergen, Head of IUT liaison office to the EU, Brussels

barbara.steenbergen@iut.nu