



IUT – Internacional Union of Tenants / AIL-Lisbon Tenants Association joint press release, 21 January , 2021 - for immediate release after the EU Parliament’s vote 16.30 h

The European Parliament promotes security of tenure, affordability and enforceable right to adequate housing - IUT President Marie Linder: This is a gamechanger in times of national housing markets, liberalisation and financialisation: affordability and protection of vulnerable groups is key!

On 21 January, the European Parliament voted for the Initiative-Report “Access to decent and affordable housing”. Ms. **Kim van Sparrentak**, rapporteur of the rapport, managed to unite a majority of votes in the claims for security of tenure, the fundamental right to housing and fair access to affordable housing.¹

The European Parliament voted with a majority in favor of the report with the following votation: 352 yes, 179 no, 152 abstentions.

Marie Linder, President of the International Union of Tenants www.iut.nu and the Swedish union of Tenants, welcomed the vote as a gamechanger in European policy:

This is the signal that we want- and the decisions that we need:

- tenant protection by security of tenure and by long term rental contracts as default option instead of gentrification and displacement;

¹ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2020-0247_EN.html

- Rent price stabilization where required and clear national rental regulations instead of skyrocketing rent hikes and rack-rents by further market liberalization;
- housing policies that are based on the principle of neutrality between home ownership, private rented accommodation and rented social housing instead of a biased favouring of homeownership;
- A tenant friendly-EU Green Deal with housing cost neutrality after renovation and modernisation (rent increases must be fully balanced by energy savings) instead of “renovictions” (evictions by renovation) and full tenants’ involvement;
- Boosting investment in affordable, social and public housing instead of unregulated, unlimited market access for profit-orientated investors and financialisation of markets by unleashed speculation and selling out of our cities;
- Support a restrictive framework for short term lettings in the EU Modify the “Digital Services Act” to offer opportunities for national governments to prevent “touristification” of our cities, limitation of permits and zoning policies to safeguard the public interest of housing affordability in line with the recent European Court of Justice verdict²;
- Winter-heating disconnection moratorium instead of energy cut-offs
- Implement “Housing first” programme of Finland³ all over Europe to house the homeless instead of inhumane lodging;
- Remove investment barriers in EU competition law by deleting the narrow target group for social housing in the EU state aid rules and reforming the EU economic governance framework to enable massive investment in housing Services of General Economic Interest (SGEI) instead of further widening the EU wide investment gap in housing of 57 billion Euro per year⁴;
- Protection of vulnerable groups in the housing market- tenant protection, security of tenure, fair and equal access to affordable housing for small and middle- income groups instead of speculative displacement of key workers, working poor and precarious households out of our cities.

² C-390/18)

³ <https://ysaatio.fi/en/housing-first-finland>

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/economy-finance/dp074_en.pdf

IUT president **Marie Linder**: “The European Parliament leads the way how to achieve the overdue and profound changes in housing markets. Whereas national governments still believe that the market will solve all housing problems- with devastating results for housing affordability all over Europe and beyond, the EU Parliament raises the red card - stop speculation and overcome investment barriers for an access to adequate and affordable housing for all!”

Housing is the highest item of expenditure for European citizens. 38 % of households at risk of poverty spend more than 40 % of their disposable income on housing or change spent above to spend if now. 156 million people in Europe are at risk for poverty if housing costs are taken into account- and the situation will aggravate in the economic downturn of the pandemic.

Achieving adequate, energy-efficient and healthy housing is a common EU and national goal

The EU Commission will have to react to this initiative report and propose suitable legislative and financial measures to be agreed and endorsed by the EU member states. Whereas according to the Protocol 26 of the EU treaty (TFEU), the provision of affordable and social housing remains and should remain under national competence, the European Commission has substantial number of competences related to the housing market, including monetary policy, loans and mortgage credit, economic governance for debt settlement and intervention in the event of financial bubbles and public costs of affordable and social housing financing.

Marie Linder: The timing could not be better: the recovery after the pandemic will have to be concentrated on green and affordable housing solutions. The EU need to prioritize the “EU Green Deal Renovation Wave” in the EU’s multiannual financial framework (MFF) and give substantial financial support in their envisaged “EU Affordable Housing Initiative”.

The EU presidency of Portugal has the unique opportunity, together with all member states and the European Commission, to make affordable housing one of the cornerstones of the action Plan of the European Pillar of Social Rights summit to be held in May 2021.

Moreover, we expect an overview of tangible results based on this EU Parliament’s report at the EU housing ministerial meeting October 2021.”

Ensuring security of tenure and inclusive housing markets

President of National IUT Member Romão Lavadinho: “The EU Parliament’s report gives a boost for our initiative for rent control/tenant protection/anti-speculative measures that we promoted in dialogue with the government in the last years” at national level.

It opens the door for substantial EU Co-financing of national affordable housing and green renovation initiatives⁵ and asks that affordable housing solutions are legally and financially incorporated in the “National Reform Programmes” of the EU member states.

It is time that all governments at all political levels cooperate supranationally with long term solid financial programs to solve one of the worst and fundamental problems we are facing all over the world- the lack of affordable and adequate housing.

More info:

Barbara Steenbergen, IUT Head of EU office, Brussels

barbara.steenbergen@iut.nu, phone: +32 2 5130784

Romão Lavadinho, President of AIL, Lisbon

Phone: +51 917607050

⁵ Investment in affordable housing is possible through the European Regional Development Fund, the Just Transition Fund, InvestEU, ESF+, Horizon Europe and Next Generation EU, and especially through the Recovery and Resilience Facility, Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative (CRII) and the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative Plus (CRII+)