



Side event:

Addressing the role of affordable rental housing in meeting the increasing housing needs in the UNECE region.

Date: 17 March

Time: 09.00-10.30

Venue: Meeting Hall I, first floor, Prague Congress Center

This event will describe the important and crucial role that private rental and social/public housing play in the UNECE region, in housing at least 100 million low- and middle income households. The event will also tell about the role of the European Union, how the EU can play an important role in providing affordable homes, and the need for more security for tenants. How do we keep costs down, and achieve true affordable housing? Why are more tenure neutral housing policies necessary? And why do we need mechanisms that control the rents? SABO, the Swedish Association of Public Housing Companies, will present a project describing how SABO, together with the Swedish Migration Agency, constructs affordable homes for migrants.

Background:

Rental housing, private- or social/public rental housing, is often neglected, or forgotten, in the debate concerning access to affordable housing, for middle- and low income households, including migrants and refugees. The focus has often been on providing homes for ownership, which is not always sustainable. Social/public housing has previously provided homes for many middle- and low income households across the UNECE region. As this sector is decreasing in most countries, these households are either forced to become poor-homeowners, or rely on the often insecure and unaffordable private rental sector.

According to Housing Europe, the number of households on waiting lists for social housing in Belgium has increased from about 140 000 in 2008, to 186 000 in 2012. In France this queue increased from 1.2 million in 2010 to 1.7 million in 2012. In Dublin only, over 22 000 applicants are now queuing for a social home, according to the Herald.ie

The government in the UK promotes Right to Buy for sitting tenants in social housing – but this will only make things worse; “There are already nearly 1.7 million people on local authority housing waiting lists across England. Selling off the homes we do have at a price which leaves very little to replace them is making this problem worse. The government has promised that every home sold will be replaced, but this is clearly not happening”, says The National Housing Federation's spokesperson.

Private renting is increasing in many west European countries, due to an increasing demand from those with low incomes who cannot afford to buy but are waiting for a social dwelling. At the same time, when house prices increase in many of our major cities, middle income households who also cannot afford to buy, have also to rely on the private rental sector.

The private rental sector in the UNECE region is in many countries a very unreliable sector, with high and rapidly increasing rents, short notices and very little security.

All in all, millions of people with low- and middle incomes incl. young adults, together with migrants, are currently seeking an affordable home in the UNECE region.

Is this about rocket-science, building homes? No, it's all about politics! If there is political courage and will – there is always a way forward.

over for agenda

Draft Agenda
IUT/Housing Europe event, March 17, 09.00-10.30

09.00: Opening remarks by

Moderator: Richard Hewgill, England, IUT vice President
rhewgill@tiscali.co.uk

- Affordable housing – how?

Mr Sven Bergenstråhle, President, International Union of Tenants, IUT
svenbergen@telia.com

- The role of social housing in the UNECE region

Ms Sorcha Edwards, Secretary General, Housing Europe
Sorcha.Edwards@housingeurope.eu

- Private rental housing, and the need for a social rental law.

Ms Barbara Steenbergen, Head of IUT Liaison office to the EU, Brussels
barbara.steenbergen@iut.nu

- The role of Housing Associations in the Netherlands and the UNECE region.

Mr Sébastien Garnier, Public Affairs EU at Aedes, Dutch Association of Social Housing Organisations,
s.garnier@aedes.nl www.aedes.nl/content/artikelen/aedes/vereniging/about-aedes.xml

- From slow and expensive to fast and cost effective, SABO's industrialized concept.

Mr Jonas Högset, Concept manager SABO Kombohouse,
SABO, Swedish Association of Public Housing Companies,
jonas.hogset@sabo.se www.sabo.se/om_sabo/english/Sidor/SABOs-Kombohus.aspx

- Conclusions, by Richard Hewgill

For more information on this event, please contact:

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