

Priorities housing politics for tenants; Dutch case

- The Dutch (national) Union of Tenants
- We represent:
 - 530 member organisations (local organisations of tenants)
 - More than 1,5 million rented houses
 - More than 7000 personal members
- Organisation:
 - 1 national and 3 regional offices
 - 40 employees
 - A linked organisation WKA research, advice, training



Our mission

1. Powerful tenants organisations
2. Equal treatment of tenants and home owners
3. Affordable rents
4. Good quality housing (inclusive energy efficiency)
5. Sufficient affordable housing (especially for lower and middle income households)
6. Mixed neighbourhoods

Powerful tenants organisations

- Tenant organisations need to be representative, diversified and professional
- Woonbond provides support to create stronger tenants organisations (for instance advice)
- Landlords also have a responsibility (facilities)
- Tenant organisations must have a strong position to negotiate about investment programs, energy saving and rental policy

Governance social housing sector

- Serious problems by some social landlords
- CEO's with too much freedom of operation have led to mismanagement, too many risks, fraud and huge losses and debts.
- * Dutch parliament wants broader discussion about the social housing sector: what are the upsides and downsides of the system.

Position of Woonbond

- We have to keep a broad social housing sector (affordability, social tasks and investment power)
- more rights and power to tenants and tenants organisations are needed (more influence in the policy of the corporation)
- There must be stronger control mechanisms within a corporation and control by an independent and strong authority (financial, housing policy, legality)

Equal treatment

- No reason to stimulate home ownership over renting: equal treatment
- Against 'right to buy' because of many negative effects (stock of affordable rental houses will diminish, less investment capacity, we want a broad sector, negative effects for non-buying tenants and the quality of neighbourhoods)

Equal treatment

- Look at the home owners sector and rental sector as a whole (one market)
- Stop with enormous tax credits for home owners (all together some € 15 thousand million)
- More market rents are only acceptable when:
 - Equal treatment by the government
 - less market disturbance (no scarcity rents);
 - Tenants have all together a higher purchasing power, especially low and lower middle income households

Affordable rents

- The Netherlands have relative good quality of rental houses.
- But total housing costs are high (on average nearly 40%).
- The Woonbond wants (in a time with lower purchasing power for households) no high rent increase and lower energy costs.

Rent policy

- Government wants from 2014 an annual tax of 760 million from (social and private) landlords.
- From 2011 and 2012 landlords get more possibilities to ask higher rents.
- Two measures:
 1. More possibilities for higher rents in parts of Netherlands with scarcity of dwellings
 2. Strange (and undesirable) mixture of income politics and rental policy (income rents)

Vision of Woonbond

- Woonbond wants rent increase equal to inflation
- A little plus of 1% is possible under several conditions:
 1. Inclusive the effect new home rentals (0,5% year)
 2. A system with flexible rent increase: so the relation between price and quality becomes better
 3. The extra money needs to be invested in social housing (new buildings, energy saving investments)

Quality and energy saving

- Rent is increasing with 3% on average, and energy costs with 8%.
- A lot of tenants are considered low income and poor households
- Fuel poverty is the new social danger
- Reduce the “second rent”!

Covenant (2008) on energy saving in social housing sector

- National government, Association of housing corporations (Aedes), Dutch Union of Tenants

Measures:

1. Change in rent-law: less points for bad houses, more points for energy efficient houses
 2. Rent increase is possible, but:
 - Participation of tenants (organisations)
 - Landlord guarantees lower monthly costs
- * Project for supporting energy saving and helping tenants (organisations)

New energy covenant

- Not only the social housing sector, but also private rental sector (with houses with bad labels on average)
- Woonbond wants more ambitions:
 - Additional energy saving investments needed
 - In the long run we have to get rid of bad labels (E, F, G)
 - Possibilities of sustainable energy (sun)
 - Lower total housing costs for tenants

Sufficient affordable housing

- At the moment renting is more popular than buying.
- Long waiting lists in Western and middle part of the Netherlands.
- Woonbond supports stimulating the building sector (short term politics)
- Important task for social landlords

Broad social housing sector

- Needed for less segregation and more investment power in neighbourhoods.
- Lower middle incomes do not have an alternative either in the private rental sector (rents are too high, € 900) or to buy (can not get mortgage)

Dutch case (1)

- Income limit for new leases of social dwellings
- 90% of new leases for households with an income less than € 34.085.
- Woonbond:
 1. National competence defining the scope of social housing
 2. Hardly any state aid (only guarantee of loans)

Dutch case (2)

- Higher income limit is needed (€ 39.000).
- For households with more persons an even higher limit is needed (€ 44.000)
- Other measures to get less restricted limit (handicapped persons, differentiate regions)

Dutch case (3)

- Together with Aedes and Dutch municipalities
- Also in Brussels lobbying, together with IUT
- Action 'ikwilookwonen' (I want to have a home) very successful
- Minister Spies said that she will seriously try to get less restrictive rules in Brussels.
- Yesterday I asked her if she had made progress.
- Her answer???