

# A Century of Tenants – A Future for Rights and Affordability





# International Union of Tenants

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## Who we are

The International Union of Tenants (IUT) is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation representing tenant organisations worldwide. Founded in 1926 in Zurich, Switzerland, IUT has had its headquarters in Stockholm, Sweden, since 1956. The IUT Liaison Office to the European Union, serving as its representative office, was established in Brussels in 2008. Today, the IUT comprises 80 member organisations in 52 countries, and our funding comes from membership fees.

Our work is guided by the Tenants' Charter, which is available in all major languages on our website at [www.iut.nu](http://www.iut.nu).

## IUT members in these countries 2026

Argentina · Australia · Austria · Belgium · Benin · Bosnia-Herzegovina · Canada · Congo-Kinshasa · Croatia · Czech Republic · Denmark · England (UK) · Estonia · Finland · France · Germany · Ghana · Hungary · Iceland · India · Israel · Italy · Ivory Coast · Japan · Kenya · Latvia · Liberia · Luxembourg · Malta · Nepal · The Netherlands · New Zealand · Nigeria · Northern Ireland (UK) · North Macedonia · Norway · Poland · Portugal · Romania · Scotland (UK) · Slovakia · Slovenia · South Africa · Spain · Sweden · Switzerland · Tanzania · Togo · Uganda · Ukraine · USA · Wales (UK)

For more information about joining IUT please go to IUT's website





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## What we want

-  Residential democracy, empowering tenants to participate in decisions affecting housing costs and environments.
  -  Security of tenancy, including limitations on rent increases.
  -  Tax neutrality, regardless of the type of housing tenure.
  -  A commitment to non-discrimination based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or religion.
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IUT Board Meeting in Dublin 2025

# International Union of Tenants

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## What we do



Facilitates and organises cooperation among tenant organisations, information sharing, and best practices. Organises working groups.



Communicates updates through its website and publishes regular newsletters.



Lobbies EU institutions and other relevant bodies.



Arranges and participates in seminars, conferences, and ceremonies.



Promote international cooperation by way of collaborating with membership organisations to analyse issues and influence decisions that affect tenants.



Organises International Tenants' Day, which takes place on the first Monday of October each year.



Partners with UN agencies, including the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and UN Habitat.



Participates in various EU networks and working groups focused on housing issues.

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# The Origins of International Cooperation (1924–1926)

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The beginnings of what would later become the International Union of Tenants can be traced to the housing crisis that followed World War I. Across Europe, shortages, overcrowding and rising rents placed severe pressure on urban households.

In 1924, Robert Hoffmayr of the Austrian tenants' association Mietervereinigung Österreichs (MVÖ) contacted the Swedish tenants' movement to propose the creation of an international organisation for tenants. At the same time, the German tenant representative Mr. Ramdohr described in correspondence the very difficult housing situation in Germany: almost no new construction since 1914, insecure tenancies, and politically influential landlords. He suggested increased cooperation between national organisations.

These efforts led to the first International Tenants' Congress, held in Zürich, 21–24 May 1926. At this meeting, the organisation was founded under its original name: The International League of Tenants.

Austria was chosen to host the international secretariat, and Dr Carl Wirth was elected chairman. Delegates adopted the first statutes and agreed to work jointly for improvements in housing conditions, the development of social rent systems, and the promotion of municipal and jointly owned housing.

The congress concluded with an appeal that would define the movement:

**“Tenants of Europe – Unite!”**



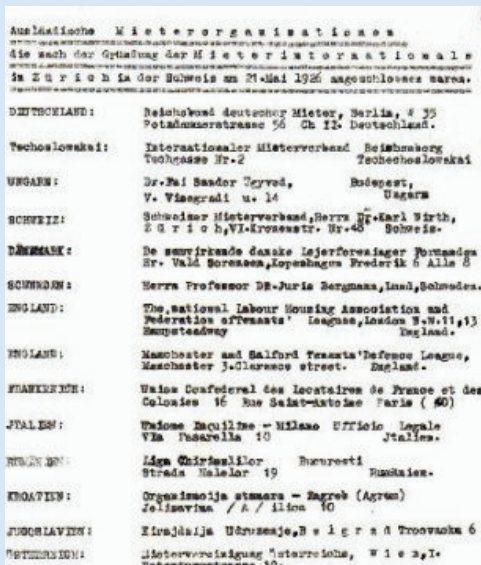
Overcrowding, Sweden 1920

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# Early Activity and a Changing Europe (1927–1939)

After Zürich, the International League of Tenants held further meetings – including Paris in 1927 and Prague in 1929. Delegates compared rent levels, discussed national housing policies and exchanged experiences, marking the first structured attempt at international cooperation between tenant movements.

By the early 1930s, activity slowed, although Swedish, Austrian and German representatives met again during the International Housing Congress in Berlin in 1931. Europe’s political environment soon made further cooperation more difficult. By 1934, tenant associations in parts of Europe were restricted, and cross-border contact diminished. Correspondence in 1939 exploring a new congress arrived too late, as the outbreak of World War II brought international work to a halt.



From 1926 to 1939, however, the League had laid important groundwork: rent comparisons, policy discussions and early expressions of international tenant solidarity. These were the first steps toward the global cooperation that would later be rebuilt after the war.

Delegates to the first known IUT assembly, in Zürich 1926

# Rebuilding After the War and IUT's Path to Today

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After World War II, many European cities – especially those with large municipal rental sectors – were heavily damaged. It took time before international cooperation among tenant organisations could resume.

By 1955, the Austrian MVÖ had recovered enough to invite tenant organisations from across Europe to a congress in Vienna. Representatives from Sweden, Denmark, West Germany and Switzerland used the opportunity to discuss re-establishing the international movement. A temporary secretariat was created, and Sweden was asked to coordinate efforts with Finland and Norway.

This led to the Nordic tenants' conference in Malmö in June 1956, attended also by Austrian and German organisations. A key decision was made: the new international secretariat would be located in Stockholm.

## **The start of the new IUT (1957)**

In 1957, the modern international organisation was formally re-established. A new international secretariat was set up in Stockholm, and Austria, Switzerland, West Germany, Denmark and Sweden became the first paying member countries. With a permanent address, an organised secretariat and stable financial contributions, this marked the beginning of the new IUT, and the real start of its post-war international work.

## **From 1957 to today**

In the decades that followed, the organisation expanded, strengthened its policy influence and developed cooperation with research networks and international institutions. Today, IUT plays an active role in housing issues across continents, continuing the work initiated in the 1920s to promote secure tenure, fair rents and decent housing for all.

The message from the founding congress remains relevant:

**“Tenants Unite!”**

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As we mark a century of organising, advocating and building solidarity, the mission that shaped IUT in its earliest days continues to guide us today.

Across regions and political systems, tenants still face challenges that require strong, collective responses and cooperation beyond national borders.

IUT remains committed to promoting secure, fair and affordable homes for all, while supporting tenant organisations in their vital work on the ground.

Together with our members and partners, we will continue to strengthen tenants' rights and influence housing policy at every level.

A century has passed – and the work for dignity, security and affordability for tenants worldwide carries on.

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### Photo credits

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