



NUI Galway  
OÉ Gaillimh

## JOINT STATEMENT

# EU Member States must act to stop evictions and prevent homelessness

*To all member states participating in the High-level Meeting on Homelessness of 21 June*

**The undersigned organisations request EU Member States to act immediately and effectively to avoid a high peak of evictions in Europe. An ambitious policy to prevent rental evictions is now more necessary than ever. Preventing homelessness arising from evictions must be part of the commitment to end homelessness by 2030.**

Across Europe, governments have put in place emergency responses to housing-related challenges that have arisen as a result of the health crisis, such as the moratoria on evictions. Several European organizations including FEANTSA<sup>1</sup>, Housing Europe<sup>2</sup>, IUT<sup>3</sup> and Abbé Pierre Foundation have repeatedly warned of the risk of an exponential increase in homelessness, as these measures slowly come to an end. Yet, the impact of the coronavirus pandemic continues to endanger the situation of vulnerable groups. It is vital to guarantee that people do not become homeless after the lifting of the moratoria on evictions.<sup>4</sup>

Research in Ireland showed that the largest single cause family homelessness was landlords evicting tenants due to legal grounds for terminating a lease in Ireland.<sup>5</sup> This practice was prohibited under the lockdown, and the number of newly homeless families fell considerably, but now that it is legal again, numbers may increase.

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<sup>1</sup> Statement: End of evictions ban will cause surge in homeless numbers:

<https://www.feantsa.org/en/news/2020/09/11/end-of-evictions-ban-will-cause-surge-in-homelessness?bcParent=27>

<sup>2</sup> Housing Europe (2021) The State of Housing in Europe 2021, [www.stateofhousing.eu](http://www.stateofhousing.eu)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.iut.nu/news/covid-19/corona-statement-from-iut/>

<sup>4</sup> In Ireland: [Evictions from rental properties to resume amid homelessness fears](#) ; In France: [A new instruction asks prefects not to evict anyone without rehousing or accommodation, as part of a communication last week on the resumption of evictions on 1 June, at the end of the state of emergency](#); In Spain: [Government extends anti-eviction measures for three months](#)

<sup>5</sup> European Journal of Homelessness \_ Volume 14, No. 1\_ 2020, <https://bit.ly/2R1fipd>



At this stage, the extension of the ban on evictions is not enough. Additional measures preventing rising numbers of homelessness are needed, including debt relief for vulnerable families, who may otherwise be losing their homes. If evictions do take place for any reason, governments must ensure that alternative accommodation exists to rapidly rehouse those who are evicted, as well as ensuring long term housing solutions.

### **Support for tenants at risk of homelessness**

Member States must provide sufficient financial support for tenants at risk of homelessness due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Although there have been some good practice models in providing targeted financial support for tenants at risk of homelessness, in most EU countries, either they do not exist, are insufficient, or are not adapted to the needs of vulnerable families. In **France**, the Minister of Housing announced the creation of a rent relief fund.<sup>6</sup> This fund will supplement the housing solidarity funds managed by the local authorities by doubling the capacity for rent payment assistance to €30 million. It will support local authorities in helping these new households whose financial situation has been made difficult by the health crisis. In **Belgium**, the Flemish government established a public fund to combat evictions.<sup>7</sup> Tenants with at least two months of rent arrears can request the social welfare service to pay 45% of the arrears to the landlord, immediately, on condition that the landlord agrees not to evict the tenant. The tenant agrees to pay the remaining 55% of the rent arrears. In **Italy**, the fund '*Fondo morosità incolpevole*' helps those who are at risk of eviction and have arrears on rent payment because of sudden changes in their circumstances (e.g. job loss). Through this fund, the municipality can provide financial support up to €8,000 to pay outstanding rents. Furthermore, private landlords who agree to lower rents for tenants facing economic hardship due to Covid-19 can now access a tax rebate up to €1,200 (*Bonus affitto*).

Social Housing providers have played a key role, not only in keeping their tenants housed during the pandemic, but also providing a good example for the broader rental sector by putting in place payment plans for tenants in arrears, providing tenants with information on what aid is available, assisting with accessing this aid, as well as reaching out to vulnerable groups. To ensure continuity in the face of growing demand the social housing sector requires full support from governments.

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<sup>6</sup> Emmanuelle Wargon confirms the creation of a rent relief fund and specifies her strategy for the end of the winter truce: <https://www.ecologie.gouv.fr/prevention-des-expulsions-locatives-emmanuelle-wargon-confirme-creation-dun-fonds-daide-aux-impayes>

<sup>7</sup> Fund to Combat Evictions: <https://www.wonenvlaanderen.be/huren/fonds-bestrijding-uit huiszettingen>



## Adequate financial resources

The human solution to prevent homelessness, by keeping people housed, is also the best from the economic perspective, because homelessness creates far more costs than securing housing. In addition to the social consequences of evicting people out of their homes during a pandemic, a wave of evictions would create significant costs for public health and social service systems. In the last 10 years, budgets for emergency accommodation have doubled or even tripled, as in Ireland and France. Public finances cannot afford a significant increase in the number of households in social services. Recent research in the US for instance, estimated \$129 billion as the cost of these social services.<sup>8</sup>

## Recommendations

- Evictions should be strictly limited for the duration of the pandemic except in cases of domestic or household violence, or anti-social behaviour.<sup>9</sup>
- Moratoria on economic evictions should continue, and temporary contracts should be automatically extended; arrangement must be made for rent arrears to be paid off over an extended period of time, without fees or other penalties.
- If evictions do take place, these must comply with the procedural and substantive law, and must be compliant with human rights norms, including the principle of proportionality and fair procedures.
- Governments should introduce a right to legal representation in eviction cases, and support the establishment of tenant unions, providing support and legal services for tenants, as well as mediation for eviction cases.
- Governments must arrange for immediate rehousing for those evicted – either in temporary or permanent housing.
- Those living in temporary accommodations, such as hotels or other emergency accommodation must not be evicted without access to alternative adequate accommodation.

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<sup>8</sup> New Research Released on the Costs of COVID-19 Evictions, Nov 19, 2020, <https://nlihc.org/news/new-research-released-costs-covid-19-evictions>

<sup>9</sup> Many of these proposals are included in the Model legislation : Model Emergency Housing Legislation Protecting the Right to Housing during COVID-19 <https://www.justiceinitiative.org/publications/model-emergency-housing-legislation-protecting-the-right-to-housing-during-covid-19>



- In meaningful consultation with those experiencing homelessness, immediate steps shall be taken to secure long-term housing options with adequate supports for people living in homelessness, including encampments, using the maximum of all State available resources. These steps may include Government acquisition of vacant housing and the repurposing of buildings to deal with the housing emergency.
- Governments should create solidarity funds (based on existing good practice models) to provide bail-out options for tenants that are incapable of paying rent arrears, but also prioritize the creation and / or review of targeted financial support measures such as housing allowances. Rent freezes and rent caps must also be considered/ expended to prevent homelessness.
- Governments should also ensure that housebuilders are able to respond to the continuing need for affordable housing.
- Measures should include a ban on credit reporting agencies from placing negative comments on a tenant's consumer credit report because of COVID-19 related arrears or eviction proceedings.
- In the long term, security of tenure and rent stabilisation and controls need to be introduced.
  - Security of tenure: Establishing an indefinite duration of tenancy as well as safeguards from eviction of tenants.
  - Rent Stabilisation and Controls: Controls of levels and frequency of rent increases, as well as caps on rents for new contracts, intended both to preserve affordability, to preclude *de facto* eviction, and safeguard access to affordable housing, as well as mobility in changing labour markets. These two essential pillars are closely interconnected.
- Fundamentally, what we have to continue fighting for – is each person's human right to a safe home.

For more information please contact [Maria José Aldanas](#).

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## Annex: National Alerts

### **Austria**

[Mietervereinigung: Sicher-Wohnen-Fonds für Mieter in Not muss jetzt kommen!](#)

### **Belgium**

[Le Front Anti-Expulsions réclame un plus long moratoire sur les expulsions domiciliaires](#)

### **France**

FAP : [Expulsions locatives : la Fondation Abbé Pierre demande la prolongation de la trêve hivernale](#)

Collectif des Associations Unies : [Une bouffée d'air pour les personnes en hébergement d'urgence, de vives inquiétudes sur le front des expulsions](#)

### **Ireland**

Threshold: [Government urged to reconsider lifting ban on evictions](#)

[Housing charities seek six-month extension to Covid eviction ban](#)

### **Spain**

[Prorrogadas hasta agosto las medidas de suspensión de desahucios y moratorias del alquiler](#)

[Los desahucios siguen subiendo](#)