

# COMPARING TENANTS ORGANISATIONS IN SWEDEN, GERMANY AND SPAIN

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# COMPARING TENANTS ORGANISATIONS SWEDEN, GERMANY AND SPAIN

Introduction and Presentation of IUT: **Annika Wahlberg**

Hyresgästföreningen Sweden: **Hans Eklund and Erik Elmgren**

Deutscher Mieterbund Bonn/Rhein-Sieg/Ahr e.V.: **Heike Keilhofer**

Sindicat de Llogateres: **Mari Pueyo**

Moderation: **Kolja Bienert**

# Swedish Union of Tenants (SUT)

**Hans Eklund**

**Regional president, Aros-Gavle**

# About me

Hans Eklund

Elected official (trustee) of the Swedish Union of Tenants (SUT) since 1990

Member of the national board of SUT and member of the board of the International Union of Tenants (IUT)

Recently retired from my work as an associate professor of Law



## Short history

In the beginning of 1900s rapid urbanisation increased the demand on housing.

- Swedish cities couldn't keep up with the demand.

The result:

- Poor living conditions.
- Overcrowding
- Rent increases
- Several attempts were made to organise tenants.





# Humble origins

In 1915 the first tenant association was founded that is still active today.

- **Rent strikes:** instead of paying rents to the landlord, the rents were deposited in banks.

The strike was successful.

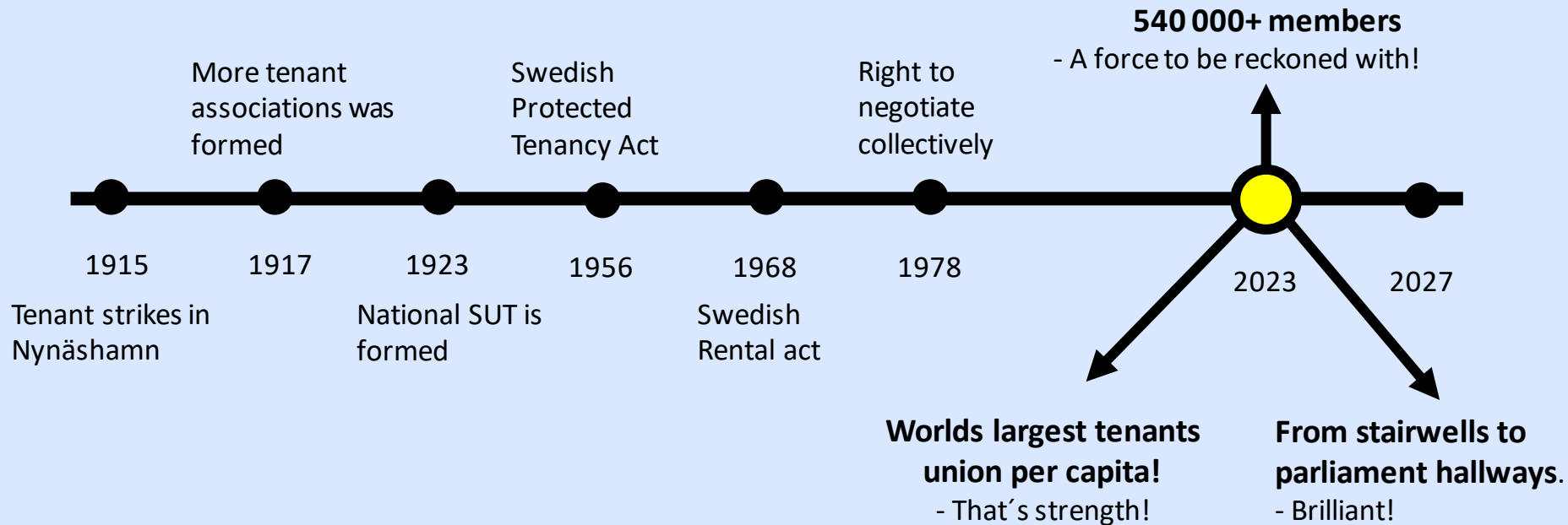
- Demands for repairs and modernization.
- From 1917 more tenants associations started to form.



*Protokoll  
vua bolayets  
1915.*

# Milestones

Through the years, the SUT has helped shape the society we live in today!



# Swedish union of Tenants today

- One of the strongest tenants' unions in the world.
- Fighting for everyone's right to secure housing.
- Our ambition is to go back to basics. To build a stronger organisation in the communities – to develop the organization from the local level.

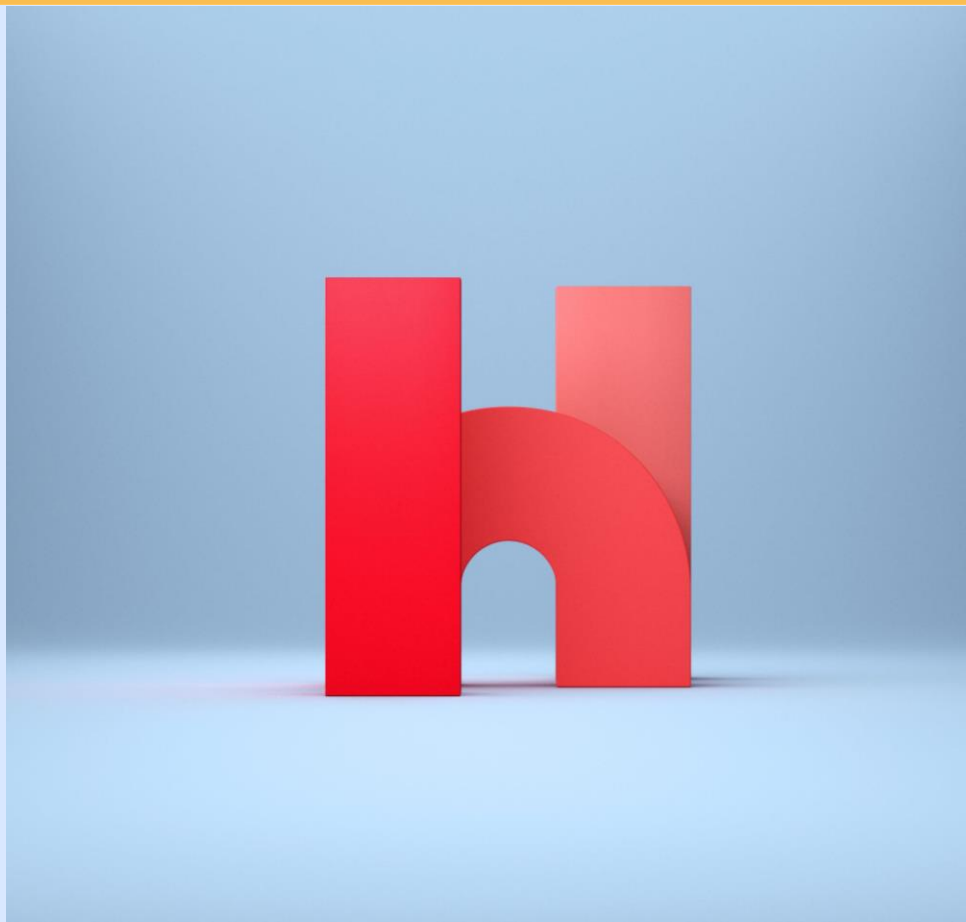
100 ÅR

Celebrating 100 years in 2023!



# How we operate

- I. Negotiating rents
- II. Counseling for tenants
- III. Local engagement
- IV. Political advocacy



# Guided by our Members

## 1200\* Local associations

- Works locally to increase tenants influence, security and community in residential areas.

## 250\* Municipal associations

- Focuses primarily on negotiation with landlords, local housing policy and support for local engagement.

## 9 Regional associations

- Coordinating negotiations on the municipal level, housing policy, developing the support to members and relationship-building with landlords.

## 1 National association

- The national board works with advocacy and represent the interests of tenant on the national level

\*approx.



# Tenant influence in rent negotiations

1. Local associations hold annual meetings
2. Local housing forums are arranged
3. A large negotiation delegation convene
4. Local delegations enters into negotiations
5. Negotiations are concluded
6. Results are shared



# Political advocacy

- Analysing and identifying problems we see on the housing market.
- We do our own research and formulate recommendations.
- Campaigning to create awareness among tenants, the general public and decision makers.
- Shaping public opinion!







# “Say NO to the governments rent chock”

Campaign: No to Market rents

- Housing policy on the top of the political agenda in 2020
- 130 000 signatures
- PM resigned





**The rent for the Sagerska palace would be 25653€. Can you afford that Ulf?**

# The organisation, negotiation and utility value system

Erik Elmgren

Managing Director

# About me

Erik Elmgren, 42 years old

Current position: Managing Director of the Swedish Union of Tenants (SUT)

SUT has 850 employees and 530.000 member households all over Sweden

Area of expertise and key interest: Housing policy, Affordable Housing, Rent setting, Renovations, Newproduction

Member of the Swedish Rentalmarketcommitte

Has participated in several government investigations and commissions about the swedish housing market

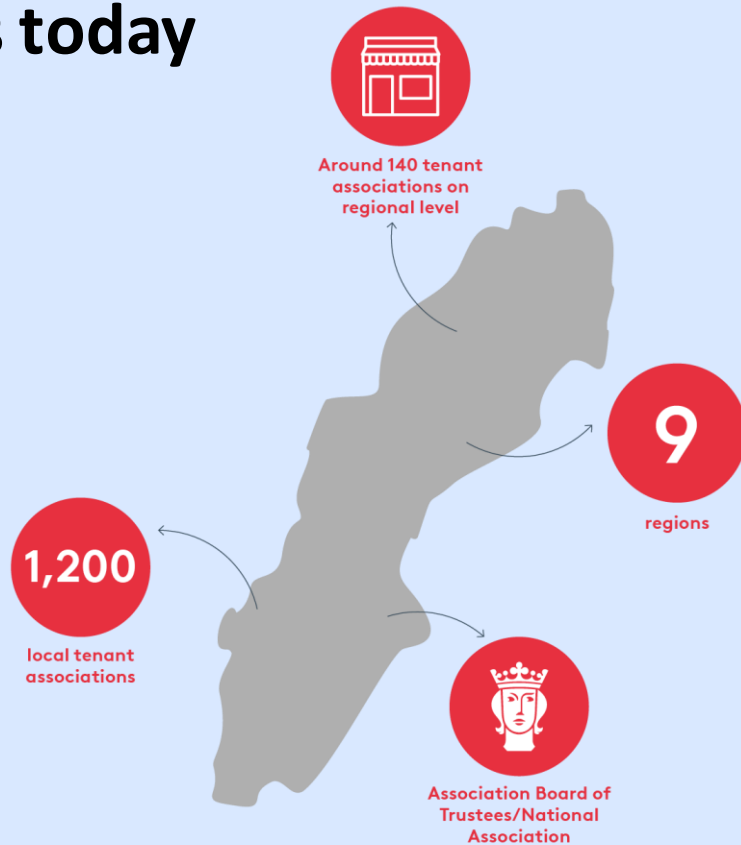
Former Head of Housing policy at SUT and Chief Negotiator

Master in Economics and Politics at Stockholm University



# The Swedish Union of Tenants today

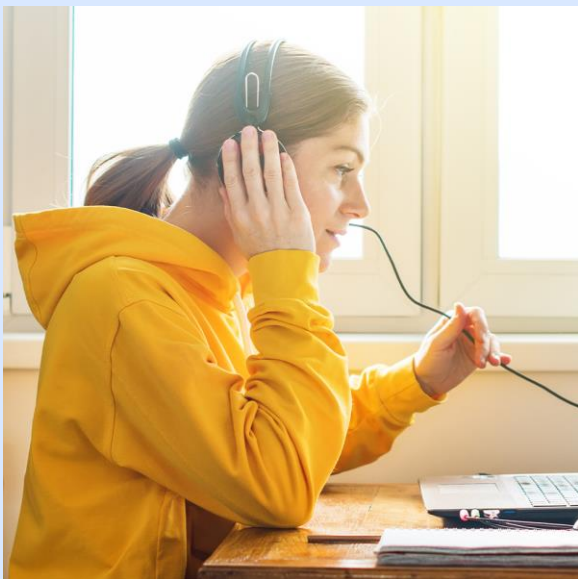
- Governed by our 500,000+ members
- 9 000 elected representatives
- 850 employees





# Supporting our members!

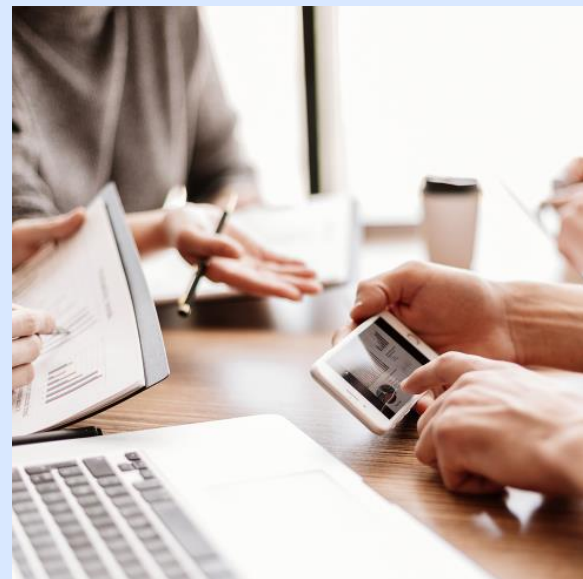
Advise to tenants



Helping to develop local associations



Negotiating rents annually




... and much, much more!



# Characteristics of rent

 Rental agreements are often **long-term**.

 **Successive and regular** returns.

 The rental agreement has a major **social and economic significance**.

# The Utility Value System exist between market rents and regulation

Current system

## Market rents

- Contractual freedom
- Free setting of rent
- No protected tenancy

1907–1917

Shortage, overcrowding, increased construction costs, low level of construction

1923–1942

Shortage of housing, high rents, conflicts, evictions, rent strikes

## The utility value system

- Contractual freedom with:
  - rent ceiling
  - right of redress

1956 – 1968 Swedish Protected Tenancy Act and provisional arrangement, the parties take the initiative to negotiate

The 1968 Swedish Rental Act – utility value in parallel with rent regulation

1978 – Right to negotiate collectively

2006 – Presumptive rent for new production

2011 – Negotiated rents set standard

2022 – Independent arbitrator

## Rent regulation

No contractual freedom

Before 1907 regulation

1917–1923 The Swedish Rent Increase Act

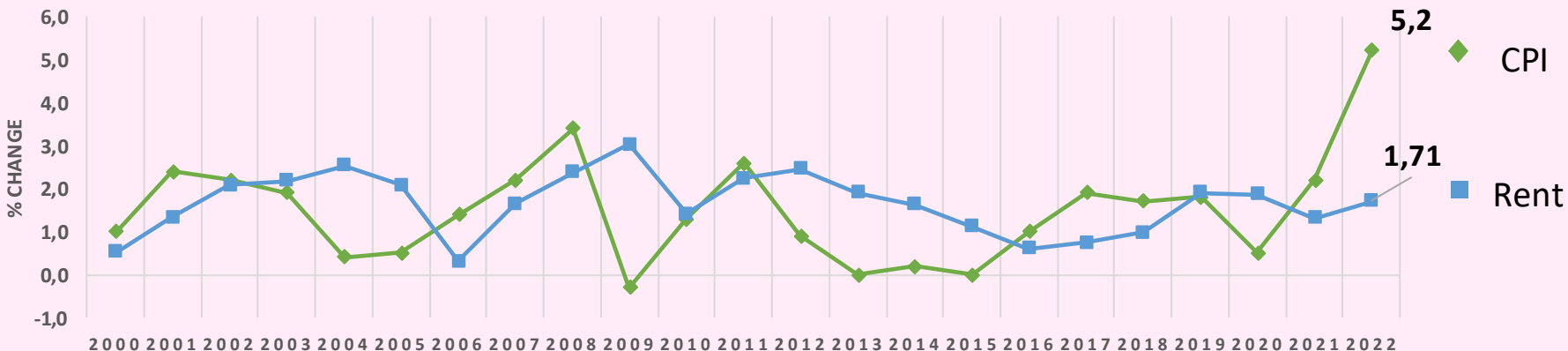
1942–1956 The Swedish Rent Regulation Act

1975 Partial regulation ceases in private portfolio

# The utility value system – stability over time

- Rent negotiation system provides consumer protection for tenants
- Has worked for 40–50 years under different economic and housing policy conditions
- Right of exchange
- The system should not be expected to solve problems with segregation, high construction costs, economic conditions for rental apartments, etc.

RENT AND CPI 2000-2022




# The utility value system – between market and regulation.

- In principle, contractual freedom – but possible to test fairness
- Protected tenancy – block against unreasonable rent
- Basic concept: prices are determined based on supply and demand – but only if there is a “balanced rental market”.
- Housing shortage should not drive rent
- The utility value – reflects the general values of tenants
- Same apartment – same rent



# Current negotiation system in brief

- Number of rental apartments: 1.6 million, 50/50 public-private
- Number of tenants: approx. 3 million
- Number of negotiated apartments: 1.5 million
- Total rental sum: SEK 117 billion in 2021
- 300 municipal housing companies, FO for 45,000 private properties
- Approx. 120 negotiators in nine regions
- 4,000 tenants elected for negotiation delegations

 **Cost-efficient self-regulation – with no state or municipal involvement whatsoever**



# 2023 Negotiations

- Private landlords are making historically high demands.
- 10-12% in private sector
- 6-8% in public sector
- Serious situation for tenants.
- Media coverage is helping, but situation is difficult.
- Negotiating through a new agreement →



# The tripartite agreement



Public Housing Sweden



Swedish Union of Tenants



The property owners

# About the tripartite agreement

## The basic principles, Negotiations should:

- Be conducted through negotiation by local parties
- Create and provide the right incentives for both landlords and tenants
- Be financially sustainable in the long term
- Be cyclically robust

Thank you!

## TAKE ACTION !

Connect now, follow us on all channels and grow our network!

[www.hyresgastforeningen.se](http://www.hyresgastforeningen.se)

[www.twitter.com/hyresgasterna](https://www.twitter.com/hyresgasterna)

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**Deutscher Mieterbund**  
Bonn/Rhein-Sieg/Ahr e.V.

Heike Keilhofer  
CEO

HOW DO TENANT ORGANISATIONS WORK? - GERMANY

# DEUTSCHER MIETERBUND e. V.



## 1 Deutscher Mieterbund e. V. (DMB)

umbrella organisation, political lobbying at national level across **Germany**

[www.mieterbund.de](http://www.mieterbund.de)

## 15 DMB 'Landesverbände'

umbrella organisations for political lobbying at **federal state** level

## +320 DMB 'Mietervereine' (tenant organisations)

organisations for political lobbying and tenant advice (legal and practical) at **local level**.

## HOW DO TENANT ORGANISATIONS WORK? - GERMANY

# 1 DMB National Umbrella Organisation

**German Tenant Organisation (DMB) = political representative of all tenants in Germany**

- Tenants = members of +320 tenant organisations at local/regional level (membership based on households, +1.25 million households)  
= approximately **3 million tenants!**
- **Legal advice is exclusively provided to members at local level.**
- In the Federal Republic of Germany, **tenant law = national law.**
  - Germany's 16 federal states (i.e. North Rhine-Westphalia) **MUST** implement some of the tenant protection measures in their federal state.
  - And they **CAN** implement additional measures, if they consider it necessary.

## HOW DO TENANT ORGANISATIONS WORK? - GERMANY

# 1 DMB National Umbrella Organisation

Besides legal advice, counselling and tenant support the German Tenant Organisation (DMB), also deals with questions concerning energy efficiency, energetic renovation and modernization. This is done both at national, federal state and local / regional level.

- **Example: Alliance for Affordable Housing (Bündnis für bezahlbares Wohnen)**  
German umbrella organisation of government and civil society entities. No legal advice.

DMB national umbrella organisation services for member organisations at local/regional level:

- Germany-wide DMB magazine ([MieterZeitung](#)) for members feat. news section from regional / local DMB associations
- Leaflets and brochures
- IT-support: software for tenant organisations and websites
- Legal costs insurance

HOW DO TENANT ORGANISATIONS WORK? - GERMANY

# 15 DMB Federal State Umbrella Organisations

- **Focus: political representation of tenant interests at federal state level**

Many relevant decisions and rules are competences of the federal states, such as the promotion of social housing or juridical regulations.

- **Also:** support for member tenant associations from at local/regional level (organization, support on political issues related to tenants)
- Alliance for Affordable Housing ('*Bündnis für bezahlbares Wohnen*') – federal state level.
- Board members are elected from among the tenant associations.



## HOW DO TENANT ORGANISATIONS WORK? - GERMANY

# DMB Bonn/Rhein-Sieg/Ahr e. V.

- **Established: 1919**
- **Members: 23.650** (2023 data, counted in households)
- **Fee: 90 Euro** (annual)
- Services: correspondence, legal advice & protection, DMB MieterZeitung magazine feat. a 2-page Bonn area news section, newsletter
- **1 permanent headquarter office in Bonn** (total population 320.000 pax, mostly tenants)
  - **1 permanent branch office in Siegburg** / Rhein-Sieg district (total population 600.000 pax, mostly homeowners)
  - **2 field offices** for weekly support in townhalls
- Member of:
  - Deutscher Mieterbund NRW (federal state umbrella organisation in North Rhine-Westphalia with 295.600 members) [www.mieterbund-nrw.de](http://www.mieterbund-nrw.de)
  - Alliance for Affordable Housing Bonn and Rhein-Sieg ('*Bündnis für bezahlbares Wohnen Bonn and Rhein-Sieg*')

## HOW DO TENANT ORGANISATIONS WORK? - GERMANY

# DMB Bonn/Rhein-Sieg/Ahr e. V.

- **Staff: 24 pax, 2 departments (administration / legal)**
  - CEO: 1 pax administration, 1 pax legal
  - Legal advisors: 10 pax
  - Administration: 11 pax
  - Trainee ('Ausbildung'): 1 pax
- **Board of directors:** 9 unpaid board members from different parts of society (welfare organisations, senior experts, politics, public relations)
- **Advisory board:** 5 unpaid members, advising and supporting the Board of directors
- **Opening times:** Mon to Fri, 9 am to 6 pm
- **Legal advice:** each 20 minutes
- **Appointments:** face-to-face, telephone, video conferences, mailing
- **Others:** correspondence with landlord and property management

## HOW DO TENANT ORGANISATIONS WORK? - GERMANY

# DMB Bonn/Rhein-Sieg/Ahr e. V.

- Political lobbying
- Participation in the official Rent Index Expert Group (rent indexes in Bonn, Siegburg, Troisdorf, Sankt Augustin)
- Co-founders of the website "Soziales Bonn" ([www.soziales-bonn.de](http://www.soziales-bonn.de)), a news platform focussed on social issues.
- Member of the Bonn roundtable that promotes that people are not cut off from energy supply even if they cannot pay. Members: DMB Bonn, City of Bonn, municipal energy and water providers, JobCenter, welfare associations and consumer protection associations.
- Special agreements with the City of Bonn, the Bonn JobCenter and other cities
- City institutions can pay an annual DMB Bonn membership fee in case eligible citizens receiving welfare service face housing-related problems (i.e. exaggerated additional expenses). The DMB membership allows for giving these citizens legal advice. For city institutions it is less expensive to pay for the fee than paying a bill of exaggerated additional expenses.

## TAKE ACTION !

Connect now, follow us on all channels and grow our network!

[www.mieterbund-bonn.de](http://www.mieterbund-bonn.de)

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**Deutscher Mieterbund**  
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**Thank you!**



# SINDICAT

# DE LLOGATERES

Mari Pueyo

Coordinator of the international working group

# Where do we come from?

**SINDICAT  
DE LLOGATERES**

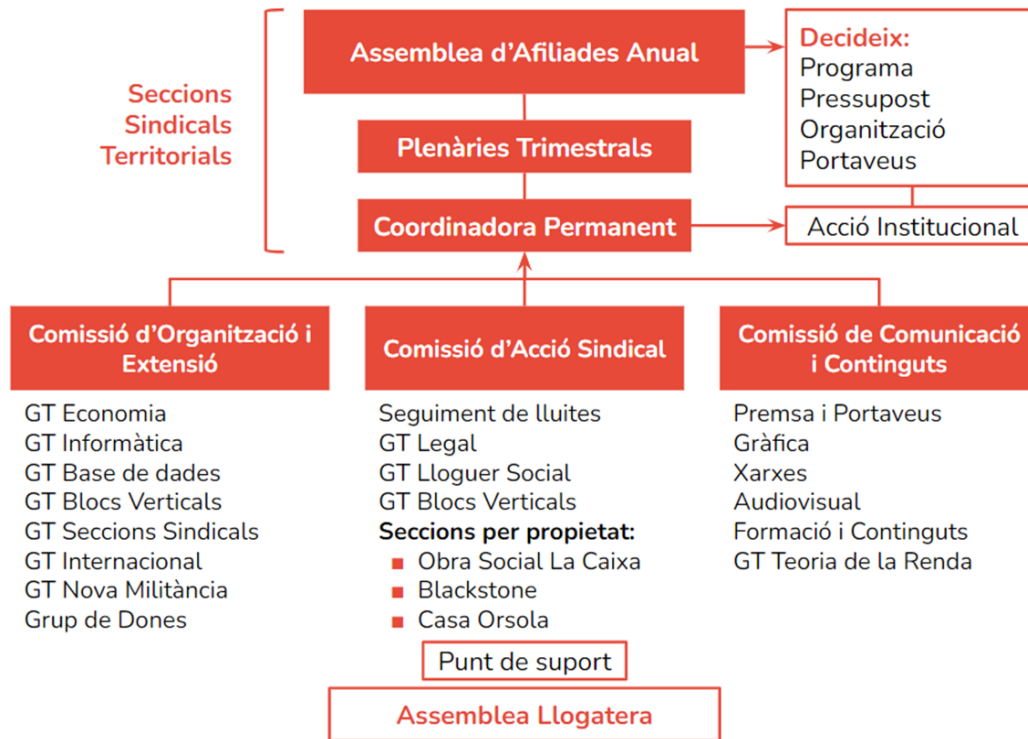
- Historical context
- From renting to ownership after the war
- Real estate bubble from 1997 to 2008: “El totxo”
- Global financial Crisis on 2008: big eviction waves start
- May of 2017, The Sindicat is born
- Shift of interest in investment
- Austerity: wages freeze, rents grow
- Growing necessity of fighting invisible evictions and rent growth

## Our goals

**SINDICAT  
DE LLOGATERES**

- Effective rent Control
- Automatic contract renovation
- Acknowledgement of abusive clauses
- Collective rights (right of association, collective negotiation, and strike)
- Recovering of touristic and temporal housing for regular housing
- Exponential increase of public and protected rent park
- Recovery of all empty housing for social use
- Compulsory social rent as an alternative to eviction in situation of vulnerability
- Ending financial speculation of housing
- Putting Life back at the centre in our cities and our communities

**SINDICAT DE LLOGATERES**



# We don't work for the people, we work with the people

**SINDICAT  
DE LLOGATERES**

- Sindical Action: strategies to move forward our cases and causes
- Assemblies: working through mutual support
- Workshops: continuously learning together to better organise ourselves
- Debates: reaching consensus through constant dialogue
- Research (legal, social and political): knowledge as a resource
- Affiliation: our only source of income



## Our tools

- „Ens quedem“, our longest campaign
- Weekly assembly
- Civil disobedience and peaceful resistance
- Organized communities
- Neighbourhood defence
- Mutual support
- Anyone can be an activist of their own case
- Empowering
- Transforming fear and anxiety into hope and pride

**SINDICAT  
DE LLOGATERES**

# SINDICAT

# DE LLOGATERES

Thank you!

## TAKE ACTION !

Connect now, follow us on all channels and grow our network!

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[www.youtube.com/SindicatLloguer](https://www.youtube.com/SindicatLloguer)



**Time for your questions and ideas!**

Moderation: Kolja Bienert





**Thank you!**  
**Tack så mycket!**  
**Vielen Dank!**  
**Moltes mercès!**  
**¡Muchas gracias!**