

## **NEWSLETTER – MAY 2019**

### **Interview Karin Zauner Spokeswoman of the ECI 'Housing for All'**

#### **1. The ECI 'Housing for all' was recently launched. Why now and why was it conceived in Austria?**

Vienna, the capital of Austria, is known worldwide as a best practice example for affordable housing. In Vienna, housing has been a public responsibility for more than 100 years. Today more than 60 percent of Viennese people live in public or non-profit-housing. The city administration has never made the big mistake of privatizing the public housing stock. Against this background, the Viennese have to protect this incredible heritage against the conservative and neoliberal movement. The city of Vienna has always fought for affordable housing at European level.

I work at the city administration. In recent years I have visited many cities in Europe and recognized that there is something seriously wrong with the European housing market. There is a massive lack of affordable housing in Europe's cities, the property prices and housing costs are exploding and homelessness is rapidly increasing in almost all member states. I decided to fight against the housing crisis and organized the European Citizens` Initiative "Housing for All" together with friends and other like-minded people.

#### **2. What are the aims of this European Citizens` Initiative? What will be the social benefit of applying these measures?**

In the EU, the individual member states are responsible for housing in their own countries. However, European legislation restricts investment in affordable housing by cities and communities. Therefore, we demand in our initiative a better legal and financial framework for affordable, public and social housing. The social benefits are more affordable, public and social housing, socially mixed communities, more individual housing benefits, less homelessness, more sustainable jobs and benefits to the local economy as well as shorter distances to work and more purchasing power etc. The example of Vienna, which is a city of tenants, shows that a large amount of public and affordable housing influences the private housing market. It leads to price decreasing effects.

### **3. What is the current status of the ECI? What needs to be done to be successful?**

The ECI started on 18<sup>th</sup> March. We have one year to collect more than 1 million signatures across all member states and we need to meet a certain threshold defined by the EU Commission in 7 member states. We are intensively promoting the initiative and looking for partner organizations all over Europe. We are collecting signatures online on [www.housingforall.eu](http://www.housingforall.eu) and with signature forms.

### **4. Housing policies are in the responsibility of each state. Why do you think it's needed to have regulated housing at EU level?**

It is very important to stress that housing should always be the responsibility of cities and communities and not organized at European level. Local governments and local actors know the housing situation and the needs of their citizens best. What we need at European level is a better legal and financial framework for public investment and the confession that housing is a human right!

### **5. If the ECI is successful what will be the impact of the measures in the non-profit organizations that manage social housing?**

Usually non-profit organizations get public benefits if they care for people or manage social housing. If the ECI "Housing for All" is successful and the EU commission improves legislation, cities will get the opportunity to invest more in affordable, public and adequate housing. We expect that also non-profit organizations will benefit financially. "Housing for All" is more than a European Citizens` Initiative, it`s a movement that connects existing social networks fighting for the right2housing. I think that being part of this movement is a benefit for all. We are very pleased that Leilani Farha, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to housing, supports "Housing for All" as well. Housing is a human right and not a commodity! Let`s fight for it!