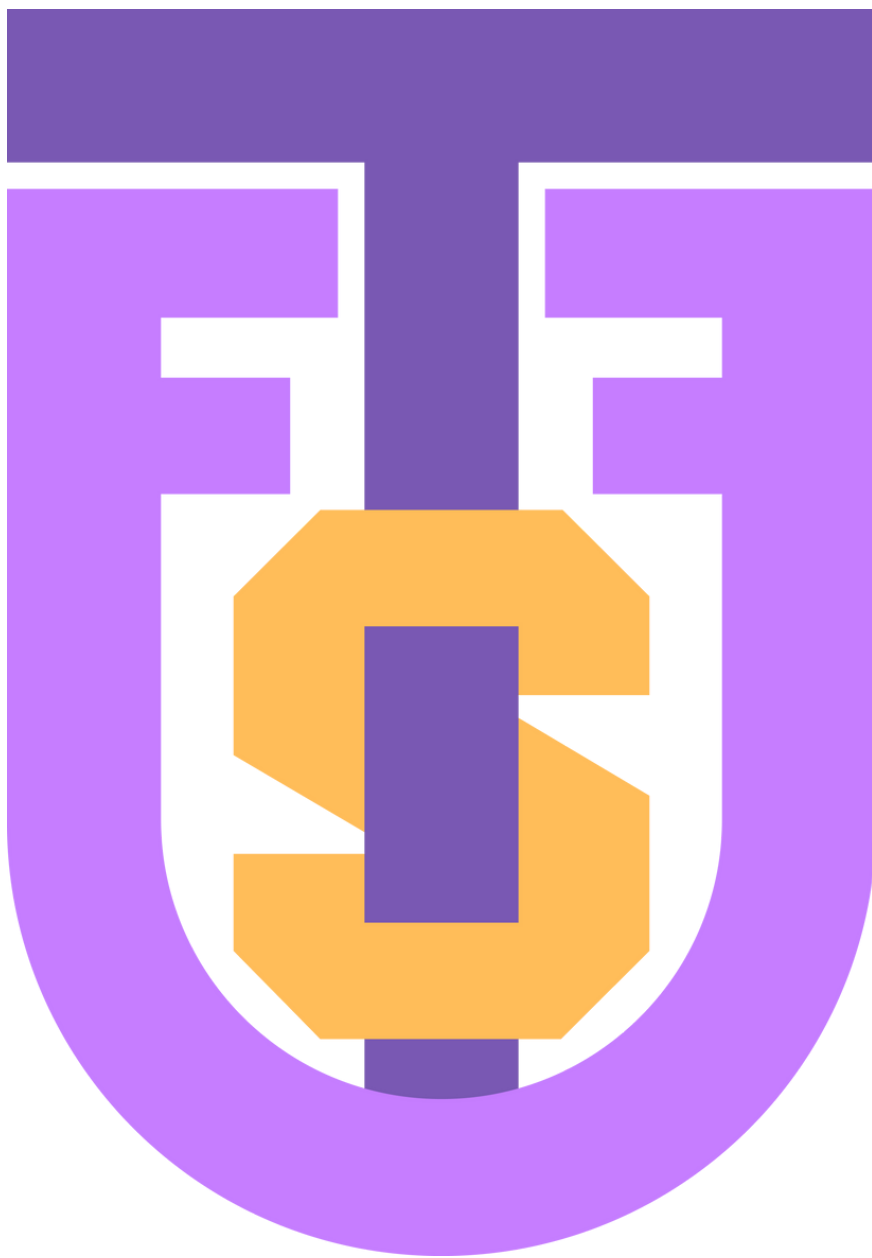


Housing Vision

2023 - 2024



Introduction

Dear Reader

Within this vision we aim to explain our opinions and views within our student housing portfolio. This vision is meant to be seen as a public opinion of the union upon which we will base our further policy. This means that this vision will function as our public decree of our opinion regarding student housing policy. This document will also function as the basis upon which later boards will have to write their policy.

The fact that the policy has to find its basis in our vision documents has two main reasons. This way we ensure that the vision documents of F.U.S.T. are consistently updated and we ensure that the actions of the board can be traced back to a decision by the General Meetings (seeing as this vision document also directs the board in their daily tasks). Thus always keeping the union's opinions relevant and based upon the opinion it's members.

Lastly, we want to recognise the ambiguity that comes with an vision document such as this. We therefore also want to clearly state that within this vision document is room for discretion of the board. If there are any questions or doubts about the handling of this vision document by any board, we redirect you to the General Meetings.

On behalf of the 1st board of F.U.S.T.,
Thijs Jansen
Chairman Federal Union Students Tilburg

Quantity

Proper student housing today, starts with more student housing yesterday!

The student housing shortage has been a well known fact throughout the municipality, the educational institutions and amongst students for years. This shortage in and of itself is already a big problem, but it also comes with more problems through a ripple effect.

Student housing is often characterised as “of bad quality”, but F.U.S.T. recognises this as a result of the few houses. The fact that the market is so over saturated with renters means that landlords/student housing organisations aren’t forced to keep up the quality of their houses/apartments/etc. anymore. This same “power position”, of the landlord over their tenant, also means that tenants are less likely to seek legal aid against rogue landlords and that they can then ask any price they’d like. This shortage thus hurts students in their legal position when confronted with a rogue landlord. This lack of quality, decent prices and legal protection is all, partially, a result of the low quantity of student housing.

F.U.S.T. believes that the quantity of student housing should be a priority seeing as the student housing covenant is showing a lack of promised results (instead of 1.900 new student housing locations by 2024 we saw that, as of the addendum of 17th of May 2023, only 423 were actually realised and around 900 are in the planning phase). Therefore F.U.S.T. commits itself to keeping the signing parties to their promises. We believe that Dutch students within Tilburg should only be waiting for 2 to 3 months on a room. We make a distinction between international- and Dutch, because we recognise that international students don't have a familial home (close enough to their learning institution) to fall back on. Therefore we believe that internationals should always be able to have some form of student housing to stay at while they study in the Netherlands. We also want to add that student housing that does not comply with the Dutch laws and regulations is not considered as student housing in our eyes, but as exploitative housing.

We also recognise the difference in forms of housing. With the housing shortage having ups and downs, we recognise the need for flexible policy. For this reason, we believe that student housing should have an adaptive system with a good flow through. Students should only stay in short term housing if they will remain a student here for a short term (for example with exchange students) or if they are waiting for a form of student housing for the longer term (for example a communal student house).

Affordable

F.U.S.T. believes student housing should be affordable. This means that the rental price for a room should not be above the maximum that is determined by law. This, however, does not mean that rental prices are then affordable. Student housing, even within the legal limit can still be too much for some students. This is why we believe in creative housing based on the “woningwaarderingstelsel”.

Here we see more necessity for communal living arrangements (a traditional student house) than for independent student housing (an apartment). Communal living arrangements have a lower maximum rental price. Besides the fact that it is more affordable for students, we also want to recognise the social- and mental benefits of living in communal living arrangements.

F.U.S.T. also believes that rental prices of student housing should not be fixed. Improvements with regards to insulation for example could also reduce costs by a lot. Affordable housing should not only consider the rental price, but also what students get for that price and how it could be improved.

Quality

Student housing quality is a double edged sword. On the one hand we see that more regulations regarding student housing quality makes the quality of student living better, but we must also recognise that it results in less student housing being built. We believe that student housing should at least be safe (both in regards to security and health). We see this as the minimum requirement of decent student living. This will therefore also be where we feel the line should be drawn. Any “unnecessary luxuries” should therefore be kept out of the rental price as much as possible. This to ensure decent living condition for decent prices.

Legal position students

Students within Tilburg should feel and be protected when in disputes with their landlords. Much too often students find themselves being intimidated or they feel like they can't bring up their problems to the proper authorities, because they are afraid they won't find anything else. Therefore we feel that students should actively be informed on their legal position when it comes to renting. This could then be a stepping stone and give them the confidence and understanding to get in contact with organisations that could help them further in this regard. Here we also believe that organisations that help students in such legal disputes should take on a proactive role in contacting and informing students on their rights and responsibilities when it comes to their rental agreement.

Conclusion

F.U.S.T.'s vision on student housing is too complicated to summarise in a short conclusion. Overall we recognise the difficult subject matter that comes with student housing, but we also recognise that we as a union must be able to indicate, to ourselves and to others, what values we hold and what opinions we have with regards to certain subjects. For this reason, we created this vision document.