

# Communication guidelines: Tenants for climate!

This guide was developed as part of the project "Tenants for climate!" Are you committed to energy-efficient building renovation, phasing out gas, and affordable, climate-friendly heating and housing in Germany, Belgium, Czech Republic or France? Then the following pages may help you in your public relations work.

## Tell stories with courage!

Anyone can conduct interviews, shoot social media videos, and write press releases! The most important thing is to have the courage to do it, and it certainly doesn't have to be perfect at first—the main thing is that we make our voices heard in public. But we are only strong together, so try to support each other in public relations, before and after an interview, when giving feedback on a press release, or when dealing with hate comments on social media platforms. Try to be a role model so that others will also dare to speak to the press!

## Framing basics

### ❖ Start with shared values

Countless communication studies show that messages that begin with a connecting value can be very effective in changing the way many people think and feel. Start your message with a statement that expresses a shared value—this creates a connection with your audience and is much more convincing than a list of facts or problems.

### ❖ Energy prices have gone up—what can you do?

Show that change is possible by explaining that high heating costs, unhealthy homes and anti-social renovations are the result of political and governmental decisions. The economic system was deliberately designed this way by politicians and decision-makers, and it can be changed again.

## ❖ **Make injustice audible!**

Everyone will notice the increased heating costs when they receive their bills. People and families affected by poverty will ultimately have to watch every penny to be able to pay their bills. Landlords may even threaten to pass on the cost of energy-efficient renovations to their tenants or evict them. Tell us how this financial situation feels.

## ❖ **Describe what the world will look like tomorrow and in five years' time, once a social energy transition has been achieved.**

Start with practical political measures that could be taken immediately (tomorrow), such as having landlords cover the costs of modernization, and end your message with a political vision of the social energy transition that you want to fight for together.

## **A large audience?**

The people we want to reach are a very large and very diverse group. They have varying amounts of money, are old and young, live in the countryside and in the city, are tenants, love the neighborhood kiosk, and are sometimes shy at street festivals. They love the ping-pong table around the corner, but they are bothered by the trash. They were born here and are new to the country, they live alone, in shared apartments, with family or partners. Most importantly, we can **convince** them all that it is good to fight together for climate-friendly living.

## **What is the purpose?**

You can use and adapt the following key messages for different purposes—that's why they are also referred to as the core of public relations work. Before you use the message, consider who your audience is:

### ❖ **At the door:**

Using the [door-to-door interview](#) method, you can ask people about messages, inquire about their tenancy and heating costs, and try to organize them. If you want to organize tenants at their front door, the core message can serve as a **content guideline**. However, it is very important to talk only 30% of the time and listen 70% of the time. After all, you want to learn about your audience's problems, everyday life, and ideas.

## ❖ At the tenants' meeting

You invite several tenants from the neighborhood to the first tenants' meeting. The tenants have already taken the first step toward political organization; now it is time to strategically prepare them for an opponent and, at the same time, clearly identify different realities of life and problems. The core message can be a **schematic aid**, for example, in writing an opening statement.

## ❖ For a press release

You can reach journalists with the help of a press release. This [handout explains what you need to bear in mind when doing so](#). You can use the core message to **fill a quote**. Think about which points the person can authentically represent and how you can use them to tell a coherent story.

## ❖ For the interview

Put together the three pillars of your core message for your interviews. Ideally, you should include **all parts of the core message** in your interview. Tips for tricky questions can be found at the end of the guide.

## ❖ On social media

For video messages, it is worth incorporating a [hook-up](#) to grab the audience's attention. Think about how you can **visually convey** your core message, not just verbally. [Here is](#) a good example.

## Key messages

The following messages, one for each local context, were developed in a workshop together with communications experts, using the [race-class narrative](#).

### Czech Republic: Secure housing for all tenants

#### **Race, class and gender:**

No matter if you are a university student, a single mother with small kids or a retiree, we all need a warm and secure home where we can live as long as we need.

#### **Villain and their impact:**

Unfortunately, we are living with a great deal of uncertainty. Rents are high and continue to rise, and tenants like us have no protection against this. This is because the government does not represent our interests, but instead makes laws that favor landlords.

#### **Call to action and vision:**

That's why we organise ourselves into tenant initiatives. We need to recognise our power and utilise the tools at our disposal. This will put pressure on the government, ensuring that it can no longer ignore us and guaranteeing that we have good living conditions. For a future in which we can all live securely, free from short-term leases!

*Czech*

#### **Rasa, třída a pohlaví:**

At' už jste studentem vysoké školy, svobodnou matkou s malými dětmi nebo důchodcem, všichni potřebujeme teplý a bezpečný domov, kde můžeme žít tak dlouho, jak potřebujeme.

#### **Zloduchové a jejich vliv:**

Bohužel žijeme v velké nejistotě. Nájemné je vysoké a stále roste, a nájemníci jako my nemají žádnou ochranu. Důvodem je, že vláda nezastupuje naše zájmy, ale místo toho vytváří zákony, které zvýhodňují pronajímatele.

#### **Výzva k akci a vize:**

Proto se organizujeme do nájemnických iniciativ. Musíme si uvědomit svou sílu a využít nástroje, které máme k dispozici. Tím vyvineme tlak na vládu, která nás již nebude moci

ignorovat, a zajistíme si dobré životní podmínky. Pro budoucnost, ve které budeme všichni moci žít bezpečně, bez krátkodobých nájemních smluv!

## Germany: Renovation without rising rents

### Race, class, gender:

Our parents come from Bottrop, Damascus, Berlin, or Kiev—but we all need homes that protect us from the heat in summer and keep us warm in winter without wasting energy.

### Villain and impact:

Unfortunately, however, our homes are in poor condition. The windows are broken, the walls are poorly insulated, and the facades are crumbling. We are heating the outdoors. But if we demand that they be modernized, we risk a permanent rent increase. Why? Because the laws allow it. Chancellor Friedrich Merz could change the laws, but he is siding with the housing corporations.

### Call to action & vision:

Things cannot continue this way. We are joining forces to get the government to pass better laws. Landlords must modernize our homes in a sensible way without increasing the rent. So that we can all live in warm and healthy homes.

## Deutsch

### Großes Wir:

Unsere Eltern kommen aus Bottrop, Damaskus, Berlin oder Kiev – aber wir alle brauchen Wohnungen, die uns im Sommer vor Hitze schützen und in denen wir es im Winter warm haben, ohne Energie zu verschwenden.

### Gegner und Auswirkung:

Doch leider sind unsere Häuser in schlechtem Zustand. Die Fenster sind kaputt, die Wände nicht gut gedämmt und die Fassade bröckelt. Wir heizen zum Fenster raus. Aber wenn wir fordern, dass sie modernisiert werden, riskieren wir eine dauerhafte Mieterhöhung. Warum? Weil die Gesetze das erlauben. Bundeskanzler Friedrich Merz könnte die Gesetze ändern, aber er stellt sich auf die Seite der Wohnungskonzerne.

## Call to Action & Vision:

So kann es nicht weitergehen. Wir tun uns zusammen, damit die Regierung bessere Gesetze erlässt. Die Vermieter müssen unsere Häuser sinnvoll modernisieren, ohne dass die Miete steigt. Damit wir alle warm und gesund wohnen können.

## France: Healthy homes without speculation

### Race, class, gender:

Whether we wear a headscarf or not, whether our parents were born in Paris, Algiers, Lille or Fès, we all want a home where we can feel warm and safe and where we can imagine a future.

### The villain and their impact:

Unfortunately, our houses are in a poor state of repair. There is mold, it is cold and our heating bills are too high. Our houses are making us ill. This is because our landlords are not fulfilling their obligations. They refuse to repair our windows, even when it rains inside.

### Call to action and vision:

That's why we organise ourselves into tenant unions: to ensure that landlords are held accountable by the government. We need the city council to introduce concrete measures to protect tenants from abusive landlords. For a future in which we all have affordable, healthy housing without speculation.

## French

### Race, classe sociale, genre:

Que nous portions le voile ou non, que nos parents soient nés à Paris, Alger, Lille ou Fès, nous voulons tous un foyer où nous nous sentons bien et en sécurité, et où nous pouvons imaginer notre avenir.

### Le méchant et son impact:

Malheureusement, nos logements sont en mauvais état. Il y a de la moisissure, il fait froid et nos factures de chauffage sont trop élevées. Nos logements nous rendent malades. Cela est dû au fait que nos propriétaires ne remplissent pas leurs obligations. Ils refusent de réparer nos fenêtres, même lorsqu'il pleut à l'intérieur.

### Appel à l'action et vision:



C'est pourquoi nous nous organisons en syndicats de locataires : pour garantir que les propriétaires soient tenus responsables par le gouvernement. Nous avons besoin que le conseil municipal mette en place des mesures concrètes pour protéger les locataires contre les propriétaires abusifs. Pour un avenir où nous aurons tous un logement abordable et sain, sans spéculation.

## Belgium: Organize for affordable and dignified homes

### **Race, class, gender:**

Whether we were born in Brussels, Kiev, Bucharest or Liege, we all need a warm and healthy home without mold and humidity that doesn't cost the earth.

### **Bad landlords and their impact**

But our houses are making us ill. Our homes are falling apart, energy is being wasted, and our energy bills are skyrocketing. The reason for this is that multi-landlords just want to cash in and won't invest in the buildings. They won't repair our windows or do anything about the mold that is making us ill.

### **Call to action and vision:**

That's why it's important for us to organise ourselves into a tenants' union. By joining forces, we can put pressure on landlords. This will ensure that our apartments are finally repaired and that our energy bills no longer impoverish us. Let's work towards a future in which everyone has an affordable and dignified home!

*French*

### **Race, classe sociale, genre:**

Que nous soyons nés à Bruxelles, Kiev, Bucarest ou Liège, nous avons tous et toutes besoin d'un logement chaleureux et sain, sans moisissure ni humidité, qui ne coûte pas les yeux de la tête.

### **Les mauvais bailleurs et leur impact pour les locataires**

Mais nos logements nous rendent malades. Nos maisons tombent en ruine, l'énergie est gaspillée et nos factures énergétiques montent en flèche. La raison en est que les multi-propriétaires veulent juste encaisser l'argent sans investir dans les bâtiments. Ils ne réparent pas nos fenêtres et ne font rien contre la moisissure qui nous rend malade.

### **Appel à l'action et vision**



C'est pourquoi il est important pour nous de nous organiser en tant que syndicat de locataires. En unissant nos forces, nous pouvons faire pression sur les propriétaires et obtenir des travaux. Cela garantira que nos appartements soient enfin réparés et que nos factures d'énergie ne nous appauvrissent plus. Travaillons à un avenir où chacun aura un logement abordable et digne !



## Words that work

Don't say	Say it like this	Why?
People who live in rented accommodation.	tenants	This is easier to understand and creates identification.
We now need a social energy transition for everyone.	We tenants, families, retirees, students, and working people are joining forces to promote a social heating transition for everyone.	Write down and say who your WE is. This will make it clear how widely your interests are shared and prevent your political opponents from dividing you.
That's why we're protesting here in the district.	That's why we gathered as a neighborhood for a rally.	The word "protest" is perceived much more negatively than "demonstration" or "rally." The word "neighborhood" is perceived as more approachable and personal than "district."
Rents have risen over the years.	Rents have been increased by landlords over the last few years.	Actively explains why the rent is changing and who is responsible for it.
...climate change	the climate crisis	Change is seen as something positive that happens without our influence.
energy transition	Green heating systems and insulated homes	Don't repeat complicated words too often, but fill the energy transition with content and images when appropriate!

Social energy transition

A heating transition  
designed for tenants

If necessary, you can also  
spell out the word "social"  
in "heat transition."

## Comparing policies in different countries: implications for communications work

Three concrete levers for campaigns:

1. **Reframing.** Publicly frame thermal sealing works (fixing *Wärmelecks* / *úniky tepla*) as mandatory maintenance, not "bonus" modernization — therefore at the landlord's expense.
2. **Legal and fiscal arguments.** In France and Germany, remind landlords they already benefit from immediate deductions for maintenance, and in France that the 2023–2025 window allows a "super rental deficit" for energy renovations; in Belgium, highlight the 6% VAT rate that already reduces repair costs; in the Czech Republic, promote the real-expenses option to deduct repairs instead of claiming "unbearable costs."
3. **Negotiation and pressure.** Integrate these points into letters to landlords, legal notices, and media arguments: the fiscal tools already exist to cover maintenance costs; tenants should not have to pay for so-called "modernizations" framed as comfort improvements when in reality they are just repairs to fix energy leak

## Good responses to counterarguments

Before an interview, it is helpful to consider what questions (some of which may be difficult) reporters might ask. It is generally helpful to familiarize yourself with the **ABC tactic**. This tactic suggests answering the question very briefly (**A**cknowledge), building a bridge (**B**ridge), and finally making your own point (**C**ontent).

### There is no money to retrofit the buildings.

For years, politicians have failed to hold the housing industry accountable for renovating our homes. It is the housing corporations and private landlords that need to be taxed more heavily so that our homes stay cool in summer and warm in winter.

### Heat pumps are far too expensive!

In order to have affordable and warm homes in the long term, it is cheaper to start renovating now. Because the investment costs are high at the beginning, the government is providing support to make our houses and apartments climate-proof.

### **You want to ban my gas heating, don't you?**

To ensure that our children can continue to swim in rivers, play in forests, and learn in schools in the future, politicians must now set the course for affordable and climate-proof living. In addition to renovating our homes, this also includes enabling the installation of heat pumps in the long term.