



## “Second Opportunity” Wola Social Reintegration Program and procedure for accessing municipal housing by people graduating from homeless shelters

<b>Name of the project</b>	<b>“Second Opportunity” Wola Social Reintegration Program September 2004 – December 2006 and mechanism that it established</b>
<b>Aims and Objectives</b>	<p>Proving that people exiting homelessness can be good tenants and deserve social housing as other members of the community.</p> <p>Proving to people living in homeless shelters that getting an apartment is in fact possible.</p> <p>Providing access to communal housing to people who stay in homeless shelters and undertake individual program of getting out of homelessness and achieve “housing readiness”.</p> <p>Providing housing and support regardless of registered place of stay (not only to people registered in Warsaw)</p> <p>Providing support during first two years in housing after leaving the shelter.</p>
<b>Description</b>	<p><b>Advocacy and establishment</b> of the program: First version of the Program was drafted in 2003 by the Head of The Social Policy and Health Department of Wola District Miroslaw Starzyński – an unquestioned <i>spriritus movens</i> of the initiative. The draft was sent to local stakeholders to let them correct it and become “owners” of the idea. Finally after one year of consultations the District Council accepted it in September 2014. Stakeholders were appointed to the Program Council.</p> <p><b>Nominating and renovation of apartments.</b> The apartments were proposed by the District and chosen from the stock in very bad condition (after fire, forth floor with no elevator, etc.) and rejected by non-homeless people from housing lists. They were renovated to meet physical standard by people recruited to the Program. The cost of renovation was covered by one grant from the Ministry of labor and Social Policy, sponsors (in kind), volunteers (training for participants, covering skill they did not have ie. certified electricians). Participants’ work was treated as part of the engagement in the program and it was not paid for. Fundraising was conducted by the Open Door Association. Finally 10 apartments were ready and next 8 were “promised” to be provided.</p> <p><b>Recruitment of participants in local shelters:</b> Criteria were established by the Program Council, information was distributed in all shelters in town. Of 28 applications submitted the Council accepted 18. The whole group took part in renovation stage and all events organized in the housing stage of the program, however in the beginning of the stage only 10 participants got the keys. Others were on housing list waiting for promised apartments. Upon the end of the housing stage six people got the keys, one decided to stay in shelter and one was still waiting.</p> <p><b>Supported housing stage - getting the keys and moving in (January 2004 – December 2006):</b> Support and monitoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular phone contact of the staff and all participants.</li> <li>• The right of staff to unannounced visits – used mostly in the first year.</li> <li>• Support group meeting once a month each time in the apartment of other participant with participation of the Head of the Social Policy Dept and social workers and all 18 participants – not only those in housing already. Experience sharing etc. All meetings had official minutes and list of participants.</li> <li>• Regular monitoring from the local welfare centre through updates of “welfare interview” (has to be conducted with any client who applied for welfare) each six</li> </ul>



months.

Ongoing and ex post evaluation: three rounds of structured interviews by people from outside the staff.

<b>Core elements</b>	<p>Giving faith to the homeless – getting social apartment is possible!</p> <p>Multi-institutional cooperation (district stakeholders and ngos)</p> <p>Municipal housing for “housing ready” clients from homeless shelters</p> <p>Long term monitoring and support</p> <p>Evidence based – on going and ex post evaluation</p>
<b>Funding</b>	<p><b>Renovation of apartments: total 59,111 EURO (all in kind and volunteered)</b></p> <p>In kind donations by sponsors of ngos mostly the Open Door Association: 128710 PLN (26,570E)</p> <p>Grant from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy 90000 PLN (18,580E)</p> <p>As it was conducted by participants of the program as part of their engagement it was “costless” but ODA assumed the cost of work as 42610 PLN (10 PLN per hour) (8,800E).</p> <p>Additional consultation and advice of various professionals were assumed as 25000 PLN (50 PLN per hour) (5,161E)</p> <p><b>Housing stage: no extra costs</b></p> <p>Members of the Program Council and staff worked for the program within their regular functions and got no additional funding.</p> <p>Participants paid for housing from their income which in some cases and especially in the beginning were supplemented by welfare benefits.</p> <p>Evaluation has been funded by the Wola District.</p>
<b>Impact/ results</b>	<p>People living in shelters for the homeless actually believed that somewhere at the end of the therapy, work and all programs which they had to do is a real apartment! Getting out of homelessness was possible!</p> <p>In general it has been proven that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- homeless people can be awarded the right to social housing regardless of local connection (very strict condition at that point in time)</li> <li>- they are able to actually keep the housing</li> <li>- local institutions and departments are able to cooperate (housing stock department – local welfare center-local homeless shelters) on providing support</li> </ul> <p>Procedure was proved to be working. At least three other districts (Mokotów, Praga Południe, Targówek) had started cooperation with local shelters, welfare centers and housing stock departments in order to implement the same procedure although not necessarily all elements of the original Wola Program and under different name mostly “District Program of Getting out of Homelessness”.</p> <p>There are some evaluations of the programs in particular districts.</p>
<b>Participants</b>	<p>18 people have been recruited from Warsaw shelters for the homeless and 16 of them moved in to social or communal apartments owned by Wola District although not all of them in the beginning of the program.</p> <p>People who:</p> <p>Were homeless (staying in homeless shelters)</p> <p>Could prove local connection to Warsaw for at least 5 years either by being registered for permanent stay or by recommendation/confirmation issued by local shelters (novelty)</p> <p>Meet income criteria defined in local regulations for social or communal housing – not lower then and not higher then which in practice meant that they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- had stable jobs or long term benefits high enough</li> <li>- control substance dependency if dependency was their problem</li> <li>- WERE “HOUSING READY”</li> </ul>



<b>Staff</b>	<p><b>Program Council</b> consisting of Wola District stakeholders including Mayor, Head of Social Policy and Health Department, Director of Social Housing Stock Department, Director of Housing Management Agenda, Director of Local Welfare Centre, Directors of local homeless shelters including The Open Door Association and Caritas AW, Members of the District Council (elected).</p> <p><b>Program Staff:</b> social workers from shelters and Local Welfare Centre, psychologist and Head of Social Policy and Health Department (sociologist) as program leader.</p>
<b>Innovative aspects</b>	<p>Path for “housing ready” people from homeless shelters to social housing regardless of local connection.</p> <p>Support provided by mainstream institutions, mostly local welfare centers as opposed to support organized by ngos based on non-municipal –European – project funding.</p> <p>Ongoing and ex post evaluation even ten years after.</p>
<b>Sustainability</b>	<p>Majority of participants retained housing, even after 10 years.</p> <p>The procedure works and is used by other districts (look Evaluation).</p>
<b>Lessons learned</b>	<p>Upon announcing recruitment organizers expected a lot of candidates which did not happen as many candidates did not meet income criteria (not lower and not higher then). Some bridged the upper limit by few PLN which was not to be overcome due to local regulations.</p> <p>Some people after graduating from shelters to independent apartments experienced difficult transition from sobriety imposed as a condition of staying in shelter to “self-imposed” sobriety. A very wet “parapetówka” (house warming party) has been organized in one apartment. It was against the program rules... The support group was called immediately and situation was dealt with.</p>
<b>Obstacles</b>	<p>The “novelty” of the procedure</p> <p>Negative stereotypes on homeless people in housing</p> <p>Lack of social housing</p> <p>Lack of housing “ready people” among inhabitants of shelters for the homeless</p> <p>Lack of people meeting income criteria</p> <p>Lack of municipal/district funding for renovation of apartments. Obviously apartments dedicated to the program have always been owned and would be owned by the District and neither participants nor ngo had crucial influence on how/to whom they are allocated but still ngos and inhabitants had to cover the cost of renovation. It has been claimed to be unfair although necessary to implement the program.</p>
<b>Evaluation</b>	<p>“Second Opportunity” had an ongoing and ex post evaluation (Wygńska). The goal of ongoing evaluation was to monitor progress but also “universalism” of the procedure ie. how much its implementation depends on personal engagement of particular stakeholders as opposed to relying on regulations and obligations which stakeholders in other districts would have to follow. The reason was to guide the program so that it could be mainstreamed regardless of personal interests of more devoted officers. Some corrections were suggested and implemented (eg. Head of the Social Policy Dept should not visit participants on Sunday “without a tie” (informally)). The final evaluation concluded that majority of participants kept the housing and improved their life situation in all spheres: housing standards – some moved to bigger apartments, engagement in community, dependency, work – from black market to full time jobs, lower use of welfare, improved family relations and education/skills. In 2006, eight of ten retained housing (one died, one broke the rules) and of eight who moved in later one died, one decided to stay in shelter – others stayed housed.</p> <p>Original “Second Opportunity” has been evaluated ten years after the official closure and it was also summarized to be effective. The 2015 evaluation report states: “Few participants have not succeeded due to various reasons. In general the fact of being given an apartment contributed to better self-understanding of participants, recognition of their social roles as a</p>



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women men father worker and colleague and better skills in performing those roles (self-sufficiency qualifications labor and social competence) or improved motivation to acquire them. It started again the once interrupted life narration.” (Renata Kluska, PhD)

The program has in fact much more impact than only on original clients as its “mechanism” or “procedure” has been used in many districts of Warsaw and has been implemented as a program by at least three of them: Praga Południe, Targówek and Mokotów. The last one will be presented during the meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> of February. The districts did not implement all elements of the original and worked out their modified versions depending mostly on the condition of local networks between stakeholders: housing stock department-local shelters-local welfare center. Praga Południe has just started a forth edition. Evaluation is available for some district programs however not for the whole town.

According to Municipal Housing Department in 2008 – 2015 (30<sup>th</sup> of June) 140 social apartments and 121 communal apartments were admitted to people “exiting homelessness” from shelters and 437 and 155 respectively were qualified to be admitted (which mean they are on housing lists). Municipality does not collect data on how these people performed once they moved in.

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