HomeLab

Integrated Housing and Labour Services in the Social Rental Enterprise Model in four Central European Countries

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The HomeLab Project

Funded by the EASI programme of the European Commission.

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7 partners, 5 pilots, 4 countries – all CEE

Main goal:

Enhance life chances of vulnerable groups by decreasing inequality with the help of introducing and developing an innovative new tool, the SRE model.

The project is based on the assumption that housing and employment problems have to be *tackled simultaneously* thus integrated services shall be provided in both domains.

Specific goals:

Improving **quality** and **security** in **housing** and **labour** situation

Improve labour mobility of low income persons towards regions with well functioning job-markets.

To try the SRE model in the CEE countries and find ways to upscale the pilots – analyse the lessons and promote legislative change

The SRE model

Developed from the basis of the Social Rental Agency (SRA) model

SRAs: mediating agents between private landlords and people in housing need.

Social Rental Enterprise (SRE): housing and employment problems have to be tackled simultaneously to empower people and to enable them to maintain their homes and have adequate income. –> **housing market services are complemented with labour and social services**.

HomeLab tools

Housing: providing private or municipal rental housing, legalising housing, refurbishment of existing housing

Labour: opening up ways to legal employment, enabling people to enter labour market (trainings, qualifications)

Social counselling: assistance in improving living standards and maintain the better housing and job situation.

SRE – to mitigate risk related to vulnerable groups both on housing and labour market

HomeLab partners

Coordinator: MRI

Methodology: MRI and Budapest Institute

Pilot partners:

- From Street to Home (HU)
- Hungarian Charity Service of Malta (HU)
- Habitat for Humanity Poland (PL)
- Romodrom (CZ)
- PIN (SL)

All pilot partners are:

- NGOs
- All pilots projects are different in size
- At a different level of institutionalisation • They aim for slightly different target groups – all in need of social/affordable housing
- There are always additional HomeLab services

HomeLab target groups

Romodrom	PIN	HfH Poland	Hungarian Maltese Order	From Street to Home (ULE)
Marginalised communities – mainly Roma households (mostly cities, towns) People leaving prison	Marginalised communities – mainly Roma households (living in villages)	Hhs with substandard housing People living in institutions (homeless, people with substance abuse problem) migrants, refugees	Households in housing need (eligible for social housing) Homeless people People leaving prison Household at risk of losing their housing	Homeless people mainly those who live in huts

Further development under HomeLab 1.

Housing:

- Already provided housing services: more intensive relationship with housing owners (municipalities, private landlords, or other non-profits)

- new ways of providing housing – private rentals, private owners, real estate agency

- even where municipal housing is an option the capacity is limited → need to move to other segments of housing sector (private rentals)

- Link housing with social work, debt management!! Regular check of housing related payments.

Further development under HomeLab 2.

Employment:

- Individually tailored help from diagnosis through skill competence, provide real opportunity to find work

- Link with mentoring in employment as well

- Strong link with employers – awareness raising

Stakeholder network:

- Some pilot share the core services with other service providers (PIN, ULE,)

- Work together closely with other service providers in important services (HCSOM, HfH-PL)

HomeLab and the housing first programs

Clearly not HF:

- Willingness of cooperation is a main criteria – selection of hhs is made on certain criteria (depends on local context)
- Housing happens when the household has enough income to cover the housing costs (largely depends on the tenure type of the housing)
- Some services are obligatory (local context) - e.g. housing payments monitoring, household budget management training (CZ, SK)

Reasons:

- Project with limited duration not a long-term program
- Affordability problems are substantial – no efficient housing allowance system in these countries except for CZ, low amount of social benefits (e.g. unemployment benefits)
- Small social housing sector, lack of social housing policies
- Income generation needed for marginalised, homeless households
- Scarcity of some services essential to HF: mental health services
- PL – subgroup of people with addiction dropped out: lack of cooperation of sender institution, plus long waiting for housing

4

Constraints of upscaling

- **Volatile NGO sector – insecure income and often little perspective**

- **Lack of appropriate housing allowance system (with the exception of CZ)**

- **Unregulated private rental markets – very high prices in areas with active labour markets**

- **Success is very dependent on local factors – local support (e.g. municipality) is essential**

Thank you for your attention!

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