



Smart and Inclusive  
Solutions for a Better  
Life in Urban Districts

# Smart City Toolbox

## Replicable measure:

Vienna - Refurbishment:  
information and participation of tenants

Excerpted from: SMARTER TOGETHER – Smart City Toolbox – D8.3.2 - Version 1 – 28/06/2019



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## **Refurbishment: information and participation of tenants**

### ***Presentation of the measure***

Traditionally, when it comes to refurbishment, tenants are often afraid of changes in general or scared by possible problems due to the refurbishment works. In addition, increase of rents is a highly sensitive issue for the socially weak population.

For counteracting potential problems, a change of the current information method as well as additional co-creation possibilities were developed in Vienna concerning refurbishment works in Hauffgasse and Lorystraße.

Employees from the housing company had a door to door approach, reaching about 70 % of the tenants. This was necessary to get a broad insight into the general opinion.

In addition, an on-site information point was installed. In this container, persons of the “Wohnpartner” are available at predefined times and function as point of contact for all tenants having questions or expressing specific needs concerning the refurbishment.

As tenants of Hauffgasse were initially averse to the refurbishment, a particular attention was paid to discussion in smaller groups. Also Wiener Wohnen (developer) was supported with a different facilitation format during the information evening. The tenants of Hauffgasse had the possibility to participate in the decision concerning the colouring of the façade. Also, they decided that instead of garden furniture, they prefer a stair lift.

The tenants in Lorystraße could decide about the colour of the façade and the balconies, as well as about the design of the community space and the garden.

### ***Budget needed***

A precise budget is difficult to establish for such a measure; however, an accurate estimation will be provided at a later stage.

### ***Funding sources***

BWSG funded the work of wohnbund:consult as well as the container. The support of other parts of the project team was financed via the budget of SMARTER TOGETHER.

### ***Implementation timeframe***

Information events should take place 1 year before the refurbishment is supposed to start. Also the possibilities for co-creation should be made clear and the effective co-creation process should start.

Ongoing information over the whole refurbishment process was guaranteed.

#### **Partners required to implement the solution**

- Flat owners
- The City of Vienna as represented by the Municipal Department “Wiener Wohnen” dealing with the dialogue with the tenants
- “Wohnpartner” (housing partners)
- wohnbund:consult

#### **Preparation of the ground to create a fertile ecosystem for this measure to be set up**

There was no real “framework preparation” necessary as the measure itself was a kind of preparation measure.

It was necessary to be available on site, so a container was organised and set up in the inner court of the building block.

#### **Step by step approach**

A change of the setting of the information events was jointly designed and agreed. Instead of a rather top-down problem-oriented communication in a general assembly form, a combination of general and wider information and issue-related dialogue was established. Smaller issue-related discussion fora were designed where needs and subjective apprehensions would be tackled by relevant staff in a more integrative way.

One main focus was to reach a stronger face-to-face communication on eye level. The aim was to raise the level of trust and reach a more constructive dialogue than in a podium or auditorium situation.

The following persons were included in the different formats:

- Specialized staff from Wiener Wohnen (technicians, refurbishment managers)
- Specialized staff from “wohnpartner”
- Specialized staff from the unit dealing with social subsidies for those cases where increased rents might be problematic

The new event design also included a highly professional debriefing, where specific issues of tenants were discussed on the spot often leading to concrete solutions. The debriefings amongst all participants also contributed to the motivation of staff and to the learning process.

#### **Results/benefits available at this stage**

One important learning of the co-design especially in refurbishment-processes was, that objection is also a driver for engagement but it needs to be handled carefully. When tenants learn about the refurbishment plans of their apartments, they often react sceptically and oppose the ideas for change. Often they come well-prepared with critical arguments. Within SMARTER TOGETHER, a format and methodology was developed to give the tenants the chance to individually let off steam with the responsible bodies, but also to find solutions for the most urgent problems or fears concerning the upcoming refurbishment works. Therefore, change creates fears and opposition, but the latter are also motivators to attend information events and to discuss ongoing matters.

### **Is this measure a low hanging fruit?**

The change in the different communication ways, respectively the new design of the dialogue, is definitely a low hanging fruit. However, accompanying the refurbishment works with an info point on the long-term is rather expensive.

### **Lessons learned: enablers, barriers, solutions found**

Changes produce fear and defence but they also move people which increases the engagement.

The communication process has been assessed as being essential for the user acceptance of the solutions and the long-term quality and outcomes of the measures.

Resistance can be solved through good facilitation and carefully selected measures focusing on specific topics to be discussed in smaller groups. This makes people active and the willingness to participate is higher.

The outcome of the co-creation process will not be well balanced if not all target groups are reached.

A better understanding between developers and tenants is crucial especially in new development areas. The participation possibilities should be integrated into the daily processes of the developer / housing companies. This will lead to a better communication with the tenants about the benefits resulting from the refurbishment.

The main innovation consisted in the new design of the dialogue as well as additional personal resources that were committed.

It was helpful that the person(s) from "Wohnpartner" at the information point were mainly the same as this supports a trustful relationship.

### **Replicability**

Wiener Wohnen is adapting its processes in terms of tenant communication.

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### **Further information**

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