



# GOOD PRACTICE COMPILATION

Reactivation of vacant residential  
buildings and flats

## WRITTEN BY

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URBAN EXPERT  
Integrated Urban development  
and Participation processes

## AND ALL ALT/BAU PARTNERS:

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The URBACT transfer network ALT/BAU unites seven European cities in their effort to support the reactivation and reuse of vacant residential buildings and flats in their cities by transferring and adapting the good practice model of Chemnitz's 'Housing agency.' In order to achieve this, they have met at transnational meetings to learn and exchange about the transfer and adaptation of Chemnitz's good practice as well as other good practices from the seven partner cities. Based on this exchange, the partners have developed their own "housing agencies" adapted to their local situations.

This good practice compilation provides an inside view of the good practices the partners have discovered and explored during the course of the ALT/BAU network.

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# Chemnitz's good practice

– The Housing agency





# Chemnitz's good practice

## – The Housing agency

### Background & Challenges

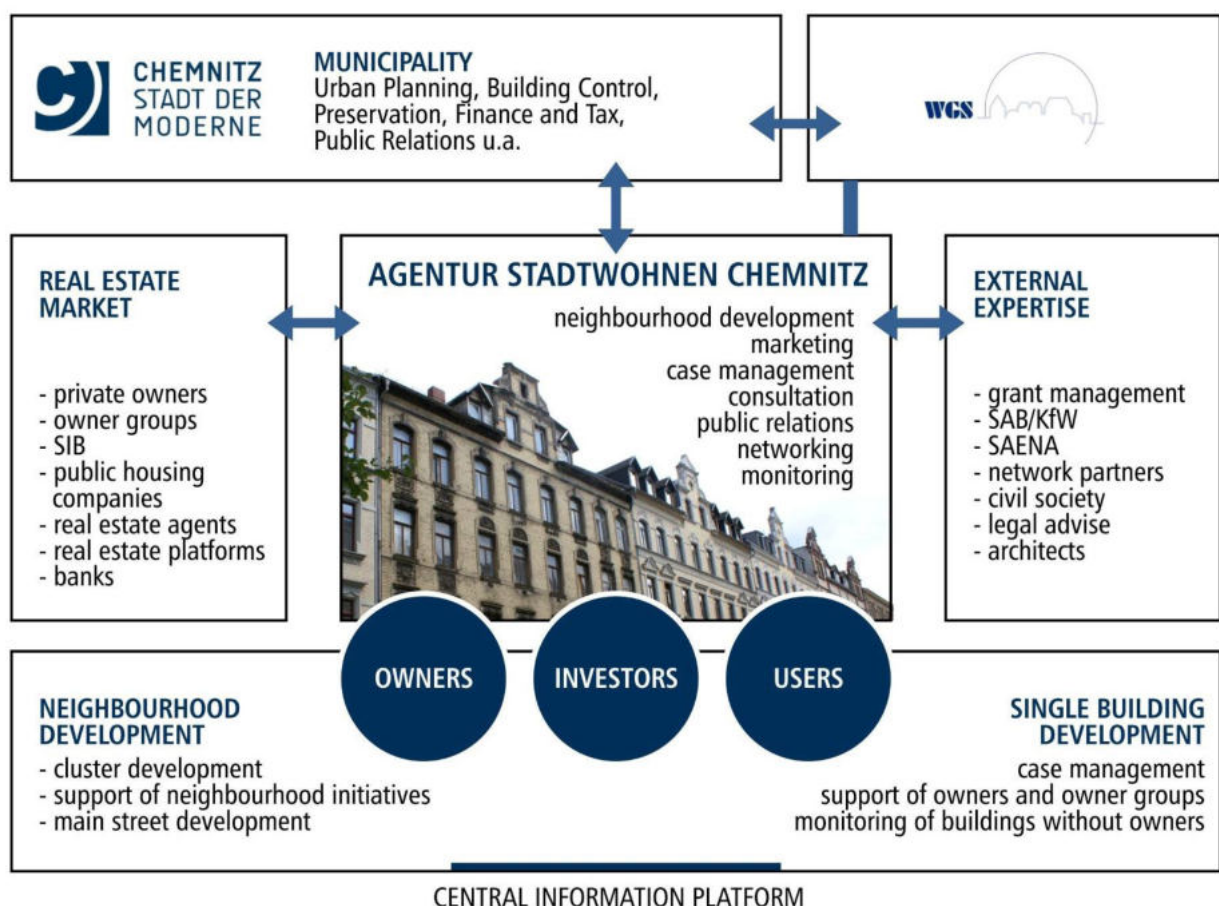
For various reasons, after German reunification in 1990, Chemnitz became a shrinking city, losing 25% of its population within 20 years. This trend was accompanied by a growing number of vacant buildings. In 2012, 18 % of the housing stock was empty; many of these buildings were in private ownership and a large proportion of this vacancy was in historic buildings. An oversupply in the historic tenement sector, unresolved ownership statuses, limited ability of owners to invest, multiple changes in ownership, speculation, bankruptcies of

real estate developers, reinstatement procedures to dispossessed owners, large communities of heirs, mortgage debt, and ownerless properties have contributed to the severe neglect and disrepair of those old buildings.

As a result, many historic and listed buildings had to be demolished due to their ruinous conditions.

### Response & Results

In 2006, Chemnitz's 'Housing agency' was created as an answer to these developments; the agency emerged from a research project for the cost-effective renovation of old buildings by a user-owner cooperation in Chemnitz.



The goal was to employ a variety of strategies, in particular the coordination of relevant stakeholders and the support of alternative housing projects, in order to enable the sustainable development of disused historic apartment buildings in various states of disrepair.

Since its foundation, the 'Housing agency' has become the central collector and distributor of information on vacant tenement buildings in Chemnitz. It has bridged the gap between the different stakeholders needed for the reactivation of these vacant tenement buildings. It has helped and connected relevant stakeholders from urban government and administration with owners, local initiatives and other real estate market actors with a pro-active approach on an informal and not profit-oriented basis.

Due to the work of the 'Housing agency,' 52 buildings are either currently being renovated or in immediate preparation for renovation and 18 buildings have been completely renovated and are inhabited. In another 20 cases, the sale to a capable investor could be arranged.

The 'Housing agency' has also helped to reduce speculation by identifying investors who are seriously interested in the timely development of the building concerned and are not looking for a speculative resale. Further, the agency has helped to channel grant money to the vacant buildings where it can be used most effectively.

Through these activities, the 'Housing agency' has helped to avoid future costs not only for the owners of decaying buildings but also for the municipality. For each building that is rehabilitated, the city does not have to go into foreclosure or substitute measures with their subsequent legal procedures. The rehabilitation has also helped to overcome the negative image of the affected neighbourhoods.

For further information, take a look at Chemnitz's 'Housing agency' fact sheet.

## 100 BUILDINGS

100

100 apartment buildings from the Gründerzeit era (1871-1918)  
61 listed

## 98 BUILDINGS WITH OWNER CONTACT

98

## 95 BUILDINGS WITH OWNER ACTIVATION

95

## 47 BUILDINGS PUBLISHED

47

## 71 BUILDINGS WITH A CHANGE IN OWNERSHIP

71

11 through foreclosure

## 63 RENOVATION OR PREPARATION PHASE

63

## 43 RE-USED BUILDINGS AFTER FINISHED RENOVATION

43

(mostly dwellings)

# Housing Agency

– Chemnitz, Germany



Reactivating decaying, vacant historic apartment buildings

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The '[Housing agency](#)' (URBACT Good Practice 2017) is a consulting service project of the City of Chemnitz. It aims at the reactivation of vacant, decaying, historic apartment buildings in the extended inner city. The 'Housing agency' provides services to owners and investors free of charge to support them in the reactivation of vacant tenement buildings. The housing agency services are carried out by a local private urban development company, which received this task through a public tender. The 'Housing agency' fulfils tasks that are not foreseen within the city administration. At the same time, through the private company, the city administration is able to gain additional know-how and work capacities.



## DESCRIPTION OF KEY COMPONENTS

The 'Housing agency' is the *central collector and distributor of information* on the vacant residential buildings. Its activities include:

- creating a database with all available and relevant information on the buildings;
- monitoring more than 200 buildings including repeated site visits;
- continuously communicating and exchanging information with the city administration, owners and real estate market actors.



The 'Housing agency' helps to organise the change of ownership if necessary by:

- pro-actively initiating and keeping contact with the owners;
- continuously searching for (small and large scale) investors, developers and alternative housing projects that are willing and able to reactivate the vacant, decaying buildings;
- publishing and disseminating information on buildings whose owners are willing to sell.

The 'Housing agency' provides support to owners and potential investors by:

- providing information about real estate market in Chemnitz and vacant buildings for sale;
- discussing the situation of the building;
- organising site visits;
- liaising with relevant experts, city administration and current owner;
- pointing out options for grant programmes and financial support from banks.

### SUCCESS FACTORS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPLICATION

Through the active collection of information about the vacant buildings, the 'Housing agency' has become the central collector and distributor of information on vacant residential buildings in Chemnitz. Through the pro-active approach to owners and potential investors and the free provision of consulting services, the agency was able to contribute significantly to the activation of these two groups to invest in vacant, decaying residential buildings in Chemnitz.

### INITIATOR & KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Initiator: City of Chemnitz

Key stakeholders: 'Housing agency' (carried out by private urban development company WGS), city administration (urban development department, building control department, building protection authority, tax department), owners, potential investors and users

### NEEDED RESOURCES

The 'Housing agency' has a staff of 2 persons with a combined working time of 2 days per week.

The staff's professional background is in urban planning and project management/ communication. The 'Housing agency' can also draw on additional expertise from within the own company, such as legal and financial expertise, real estate development, construction management, housing administration.



### FURTHER INFORMATION / EXAMPLES IN THE WEB

[www.stadtwohnen-chemnitz.de/](http://www.stadtwohnen-chemnitz.de/)

[urbact.eu/housing-agency-shrinking-cities](http://urbact.eu/housing-agency-shrinking-cities)

**ALT/BAU Transferability study, chapter 2**

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hJbFoAPFzO7yKRO46Hc2wDm8jJ8lVYq6/view?usp=sharing>

### CONTACT PERSON

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Chemnitz/WGS mbH

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# Partners' good practices





# Partners' good practices

For the reactivation of vacant buildings, a variety of activities are necessary and possible. The ALT/BAU partners have quite a bit of experience with these topics, especially in the areas of:

## Inventory and monitoring of vacant buildings and flats

The **inventory and monitoring** of vacant buildings is a vital part of identifying vacant buildings, determining the need for action and defining focus areas. A variety of tools are available for inventory and monitoring, such as analysis of existing data, newspaper & internet analysis, site visits and vacant property counts, community mapping, or surveys and interviews with owners, property managers, and tenants. Some good practices from the ALT/BAU partners are explored in the following chapters. Further information about 'Inventory and monitoring' can be found in the [Riga meeting report](#).

## Marketing activities to attract people to vacant buildings

**Marketing, promotion and communication** are important to attract the attention and interest of owners, potential investors and users who might invest in a vacant (derelict) building or to convey the advantages of selling to owners who are not interested in investing. Communication activities can also be used to convey a better perspective of the area affected by vacant buildings and the investment

opportunities there. The network partners also contributed to the exchange of experience on this topic with interesting examples. Further information about 'Marketing, promotion and communication activities' can be found in the [Vilafranca meeting report](#).

## Legal tools to reactivate vacant buildings and flats

**Legal tools** can cause a strong activation impulse for the reactivation of vacant buildings and put the municipality in a more active role. Thus, most partners have and apply such tools. Some of them are presented in this good-practice compilation. Further information about 'Financial and legal tools' can be found in the [1st online meeting report](#).

## Matching vacant flats with financially weaker tenants

## Using vacant buildings and flats to provide affordable housing

**Affordable housing and housing for financially weaker groups** is an important topic for many ALT/BAU partners and the reactivation of vacant residential buildings and flats is partly linked to these issues. Some examples are presented in this good practice compilation. Further information can be found in the [Constanta](#) and [2nd online meeting report](#).



# Inventory and monitoring of vacant buildings and flats





# Inventory and monitoring of vacant buildings and flats

**Vilafranca** presents an interesting approach in which they correlate their municipal registry of inhabitants with data from the water supply company to detect and monitor empty flats. The results are verified through site inspections.

**Constanta** uses their geographical information system (GIS) with the support of the local police department to inventory and monitor (vacant) buildings in the historic centre (urban database). They simultaneously communicate with the owners of the buildings via GIS questionnaires. The urban database is open to the public via a web application.

**Riga** presents an interesting example using the website [grausti.riga.lv](http://grausti.riga.lv) to allow citizens to map vacant and degraded buildings and vote on which building the city should act on urgently.

**Seraing** offers a good example for a very systematic approach by prioritising intervention streets, mapping the vacant buildings through site visits and categorising the buildings to assess intervention needs.

Further interesting examples in the field of "Inventory and monitoring" can be found in the ALT/BAU network. [Chemnitz](#) follows a very systematic approach as well and [Turin](#) has set up the Future Urban Legacy Lab, which provides data collection and mapping of vacant municipal properties in Turin, together with the description and definition of their "potential transformation."



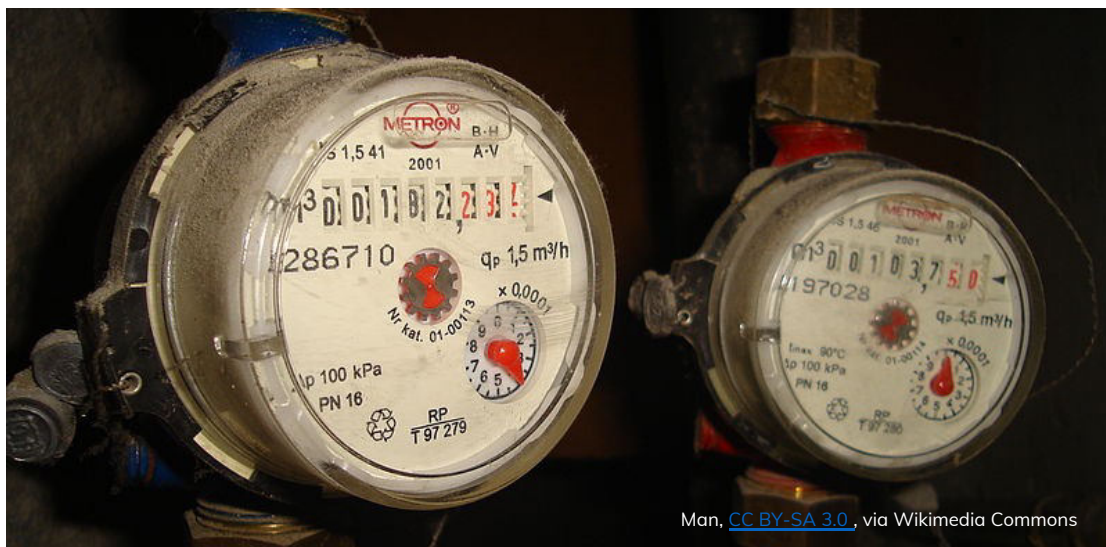
# Correlating water consumption and municipal census data

## – Vilafranca del Penedes, Spain



### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Vilafranca has a relatively high number of empty flats. To detect them, the city correlates water consumption and municipal census data. This allows an efficient identification of vacant flats, a process which is repeated every six months.



Man, [CC BY-SA 3.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

### DESCRIPTION OF KEY COMPONENTS

The method was designed by the Regional Government to detect empty flats by correlating water consumption and municipal census data.

1. City council prepares a list of addresses of flats at which no one is registered in the municipal census.
2. The list is sent to the water supply company who adds a column with the monthly water consumption. If the water consumption is under 5 m<sup>3</sup>/ month, this is a strong indication of an empty flat.
3. To prove that the flat is empty, inspections are carried out by an inspector of the city council. Two inspections are done, one directly after the data correlation and one a month later: the letterbox and consumption of utilities are checked and the neighbours are asked. If the results of both inspections indicate that no one is living there, the flat is declared empty.
4. The owner of empty flats are contacted and offered two options:
  - a. If the flat is ready for use, the flat can enter the [social rental program](#) with an unpaid loan guarantee by the regional government:
  - b. If the flat needs to be renovated, the flat can enter the program “[From empty building to social housing](#)”.
5. Ultimately, if the above measures have not worked, the administration can fine the owner for non-compliance with the social function of the home according to the law for the right to housing.

The data correlation is reviewed and updated every 6 months.

## SUCCESS FACTORS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPLICATION

Through the pro-active approach to owners and the free provision of consulting services for them, the City Council was able to contribute significantly to the reactivation of the vacant flats.

To carry out this activity, personnel is needed to create and monitor the database as well as to continuously communicate and exchange information with other city departments, owners and utility companies.

## INITIATOR & KEY STAKEHOLDERS

*Initiator:* City council of Vilafranca del Penedes

*Key stakeholders:* Housing policies department, urban planning department, owners, water supply company.

## NEEDED RESOURCES

Staff of 2 persons, working time together minimum one day per week

The staff must be experienced in the field of urban planning, housing policies and communication



**PROJECT PERIOD**  
Since 2017 (ongoing)

## CONTACT PERSON

Vilafranca del Penedes town hall

**Eugènia Martínez**  
[emartinez@vilafranca.org](mailto:emartinez@vilafranca.org)

# Using geographic information system (GIS)

## – Constanta, Romania



Fisa nr. 500



Bulevardul Regina Elisabeta nr. 4



Fatada S-V  
Fatada N-V



Fatada N-V

<b>FISA nr. 500</b>	
MONUMENT	CT-II-m-A-02801
ADRESA POSTALA	Strada, nr. – Bulevardul Regina Elisabeta nr. 4 colt cu str. –
REGIM INALTIME	S-subsol, D-demisol, <b>P-Parter, 1 E-etaj(e)</b> , ... etaj partial, M-mansarda
REGIM CONSTRUIRE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> - izolat, <input type="checkbox"/> - cuplat, <input type="checkbox"/> - insiruit
REGIM ALINIERE	<input type="checkbox"/> - la aliniament, <input type="checkbox"/> - retrasa in curte, <input type="checkbox"/> - la limita laterala a lotului <input type="checkbox"/> - la limita posterioara a lotului
STIL	<input type="checkbox"/> - Traditional, <input type="checkbox"/> - Clasicist, eclectic, <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> - Art-Nouveau, <input type="checkbox"/> - Alt stil <input type="checkbox"/> - Neoromanesc, <input type="checkbox"/> - Modernist, <input type="checkbox"/> - International 1960, <input type="checkbox"/> - 1970-1980, Dupa 1990: <input type="checkbox"/> - traditional, <input type="checkbox"/> - contemporan, <input type="checkbox"/> - fara stil
AN CONSTRUIRE (facultativ)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> - datare exacta – inscriptie: 1910 <input type="checkbox"/> - Ante 1900, <input type="checkbox"/> - 1900-1930, <input type="checkbox"/> - 1940-50, <input type="checkbox"/> - 1960-70, <input type="checkbox"/> - 1970-80, <input type="checkbox"/> - dupa 1990
TIP SI FUNCTIUNE CONSTRUCTII	PRINCIPALA <input type="checkbox"/> - functionala <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> - nefunctionala ANEXE numar, functiune, materiale
STARE CONSTRUCTII	PRINCIPALA <input type="checkbox"/> - Foarte Buna, <input type="checkbox"/> - Buna, <input type="checkbox"/> - Medie, <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> - Rea, <input type="checkbox"/> - Foarte rea (ruina) ANEXE <input type="checkbox"/> - Foarte Buna, <input type="checkbox"/> - Buna, <input type="checkbox"/> - Medie, <input type="checkbox"/> - Rea, <input type="checkbox"/> - Foarte rea (ruina)
MATERIALE FINISAJ cladire principala	
FATADE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> - Tencuiala, <input type="checkbox"/> - placaj caramida, <input type="checkbox"/> - placaj piatra, <input type="checkbox"/> - placaj lemn, <input type="checkbox"/> - cortina sticla, <input type="checkbox"/> - altele culoare: alb
SOCLU	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> - Tencuiala, <input type="checkbox"/> - similitpiatra, <input type="checkbox"/> - piatra, <input type="checkbox"/> - piatra artificiala, gresie, <input type="checkbox"/> - altele
ACOPERIS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> - sarpanita, <input type="checkbox"/> - mansarda, <input type="checkbox"/> - terasa

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Constanta has a relatively high number of degraded, vacant buildings in its historic city centre. To identify, inventory and map these buildings as well as to find solutions and monitor their reactivation, Constanta has created an urban planning database using a geographic information system (GIS – ArcGIS). The use of GIS allows different analyses to be carried out and results to be visualised using maps. Through the database, relevant information about these buildings and their environment are collected, centrally assembled and made available to relevant stakeholders.

### DESCRIPTION OF KEY COMPONENTS

Key components of creating the urban planning database:

1. **Gathering existing data** (technical, historical, cultural and social information, current situation and changes) from city hall departments (urban development department, patrimony department, department local police), public service of taxes and fees and autonomous regime of public and private domain exploitation.
2. **Monitoring physical state and vacancy of buildings**  
Based on a set of technical criteria (evaluation sheet), the local police department classifies and monitors the degraded buildings in the historic city centre. Owners of degraded buildings are notified by the local police and set a deadline for the rehabilitation. If the deadline is not respected, the police inform the city hall, which can apply an increased property tax of up to 500 %.

3. **Developing technical datasheets** for each building in the target area conducted by junior architects as volunteers and technical experts from the county department for culture with the help of the owners. A team of volunteer architects maps the buildings during a field visit. The inventory results, including information about architectural style, technical situation, building year, type and function of building, height class, construction mode (isolated, coupled or twisted), address and name of owner are inserted into the technical datasheet. In the future, the owner will be able to access the technical file to complete or change information.
4. **Uploading data in ArcGIS desktop application platform**, systematising the entries and periodically updating them;
5. **Make the database available** for owners.

The database also contains other indirect information necessary for local administration efforts for the urban renewal of the historical centre, like:

- which part of the historic city center's infrastructure is already rehabilitated and which will be rehabilitated in the next years;
- which buildings are in the city program "Rehabilitation of the facades and roofs of the buildings owned by the municipality of Constanta, and under RAEDPP administration";
- written proposals submitted by citizens, owners, tenants, NGO's, and specialists regarding the urban renewal and safeguarding of the historic city centre.

### SUCCESS FACTORS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPLICATION

The involvement of stakeholders in gathering information and assembling the database as well as providing relevant stakeholders access to this information strengthens the capacities of the local stakeholders to become engaged. In addition, the capacity of the local authority to analyse the current situation and find solutions is strengthened.

### INITIATOR & KEY STAKEHOLDERS

*Initiator:* Urban development department, City hall of Constanta

*Key stakeholders:* owners, tenants, residents, institutions, businesses from historic city centre, buyers, investors, developers, NGOs, artists and commercial firms interested in temporary use.



### NEEDED RESOURCES

Two inspectors from the Patrimony Department with their work, knowledge and expertise,

- Two workstation PC and ArcGIS Pro desktop application in order to construct the database with urban planning information gathered from City Hall departments and public institutions
- Personal for public participation of stakeholders

### FURTHER INFORMATION / EXAMPLES IN THE WEB

<https://primariact.maps.arcgis.com/apps/PublicInformation/index.html?appid=4c2025d786d94f54aa6999e023b20668>

[http://bit.ly/urbandatabase\\_constanta\\_questionnaire](http://bit.ly/urbandatabase_constanta_questionnaire)

<http://www.primaria-constantia.ro/primarie/urbanism>

### PROJECT PERIOD

Since 2018 (ongoing)

### CONTACT PERSON

City Hall of Constanta,  
Chief architect

**Mihai Radu Vanturache**  
arhitect.sef@outlook.com



# Participative online mapping 'GRAUSTI.RIGA.LV'

– Riga, Latvia



## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Riga has a relatively high number of abandoned and degraded buildings. To inventory and monitor them, the Property Department of Riga has developed the interactive platform and mapping tool [www.grausti.riga.lv](http://www.grausti.riga.lv). The platform allows an active participation of the citizens in the mapping of degraded buildings and voting on which building(s) the city should urgently address. In addition, the citizens can follow updates regarding the mapped buildings.

## DESCRIPTION OF KEY COMPONENTS

1. **Submitting degraded buildings:** Via the platform, residents can submit information about buildings they think are degraded or ruining the urban environment. They provide the address, comments about the state of the building and any other information they think is relevant. A photo of the building can also be submitted. In addition, employees of the Property Department monitor buildings and add information if new degraded, abandoned or vacant buildings are identified.
2. **Site visits:** Employees of the Property Department do site visits to confirm the information and monitor the buildings.

3. **Mapping degraded buildings:** When the information is processed, the submitted building appears on the website's map.
4. **Collecting additional data:** Employees of the Property Department provide additional information from public registers and internal databases for each mapped building, including photos, type of ownership (private property, municipal property, co-ownership etc.), cadastral number, whether the building is classified as degraded building and which category (A, B, C), as well as whether the Council has issued a resolution for compulsory renovation (and when and if it is being fulfilled by the owner).
5. **Putting data online:** All data is added to the website. Additionally, the website provides information for property owners about co-funding opportunities for the preservation of cultural heritage buildings and where to seek professional support for the renovation of the building.
6. **Voting:** Citizens can vote on buildings ("like" them) for which they want the city to become active for their reactivation (i.e. compulsory renovation). The most "liked" buildings appear on a "top 10" list on the website. The voting also helps public institutions prioritize the most endangered buildings or the ones impacting the urban environment most for compulsory renovations or demolition.

### SUCCESS FACTORS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPLICATION

- The interactive mapping tool makes the issue and current situation of degraded and vacant buildings visual and raises the awareness about it. It also informs citizens about the progress or actions taken for the reactivation of the buildings;
- The public mapping supports the city in the identification of abandoned or degraded buildings, saving public resources (workforce and financial resources);
- It is an easy way for the public to report empty buildings;
- The voting mechanism and "top 10" list works as a shaming tool and puts public pressure on owners of degraded buildings, motivating them to safeguard their properties, especially the ones with heritage value;
- It encourages property owners to maintain their properties;
- It enables regular monitoring of buildings submitted to the platform through site visits by employees.



### INITIATOR & KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Initiator: Riga City Council's Property Department

Key stakeholders: Citizens

### NEEDED RESOURCES

The platform [www.grausti.riga.lv](http://www.grausti.riga.lv) is financed by the Property Department of Riga City Council. It is maintained by several IT and building monitoring division employees of the department as part of their official employment duties.

### FURTHER INFORMATION / EXAMPLES IN THE WEB

[www.grausti.riga.lv](http://www.grausti.riga.lv)

**PROJECT PERIOD** Since 2015 (ongoing)

### CONTACT PERSON

City of Riga

**Villiams Vroblevskis**

[Villiams.Vroblevskis@riga.lv](mailto:Villiams.Vroblevskis@riga.lv)

# Field visits – Categorisation – Collaboration – Seraing, Belgium



A. State of ruin,  
safety danger



B. Need of heavy  
renovation



C. Need of  
maintenance



D. Good condition,  
but vacant

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Seraing has a relatively high number of vacant buildings in need of rehabilitation, but there is no actual overview. In order to determine the need for action, [Eriges](#) carried out a first inventory of vacant buildings in Seraing. They applied a five-step method to ensure an efficient inventory process.

## DESCRIPTION OF KEY COMPONENTS

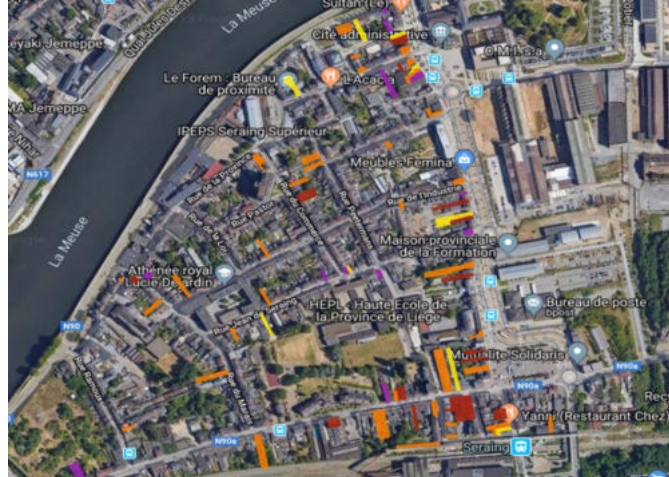
1. **Priority intervention streets:** In consultation with the housing and urban development city services, relevant streets have been determined within Seraing's priority intervention neighbourhoods of the requalification program of the City (Master Plan)..
2. **Evaluation form and field visit:** For the inventory an 'evaluation form' was created to collect relevant information about the vacant buildings during field visits. The information collected includes:
  - Situation/location + pictures
  - Information about the building: type of building, facade length, number of floors, commercial ground floor, etc.
  - Condition of the different parts of building (facade, roof, joineries, garden, etc.): good, medium, bad
  - Information that might suggest that the building is vacant or squatted: obscured or broken windows, full mailbox, plants growing on the façade, etc.
  - Neighbourhood information: Any complementary information found by looking around in the immediate area, talking with neighbours or looking at information on attached buildings
  - Any information on current situation: renovation works started, for sale, for rent, etc.
3. **Categorisation:** Based on the information collected, the identified vacant buildings are classified in one of four categories following the evaluation criteria (s. picture above).
4. **Collaboration of housing, urban development and tax city services:** The housing, urban development and tax city services added further information concerning owners, permits, history of the situation, etc. to the evaluation form.



5. **Mapping of vacant building:** The results of the evaluation form were mapped (using google maps; in future using ArcGIS), pointing out useful data, such as whether the building is for sale, rent, vacant or unhealthy. Different city departments and city service providers have access to the data.



- / For sale or rent
- / Vacant shop
- / Vacant buildings
- / Unhealthy buildings



### SUCCESS FACTORS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPLICATION

A good field inventory is the base for all further actions. Think about the method and means of long-term updating. Use a digital platform for efficient work, data sharing between departments involved and updating i.e. <https://survey123.arcgis.com>, Collector for ArcGIS, ODK Collect ...

The categorisation (partly in discussion) allows an increase the building tax depending on the state of deterioration, an estimate of the range of necessary investment for renovation and which buildings would be suitable for temporary uses/occupation.

### INITIATOR & KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Initiator: Eriges

Key stakeholders: City of Seraing, housing and urban development departments, students

### NEEDED RESOURCES

- Trainee or job student for field inventory (1-4 months)
- Coordinator for coordination of inventory project, organization of meetings with city services

**PROJECT PERIOD 2019**

**CONTACT PERSON**

Eriges

Bénédicte Borckmans  
bborckmans@eriges.be



# Marketing activities to attract people to vacant buildings



# Marketing activities to attract people to vacant buildings

**Vilafranca** and **Seraing** present two similar examples of using events to draw residents' attention to vacant buildings and flats in the city and to trigger potential activities

**Vilafranca** organises music and family events in areas with vacant buildings, whereas **Seraing** organises annual cultural festivals on a brownfield site.

**Chemnitz**'s 'Housing agency' and **Turin** Urban Lab also have sophisticated local marketing and communication approaches.

**AGENTUR StadtWohnen CHEMNITZ**

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**CHEMNITZ STADT DER MODERNE** **URBACT** **WGS WIR GESTALTEN STADT**

# Music and family events

## – Vilafranca del Penedes, Spain



### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Programming of music and family events on weekends in areas with vacant buildings in order to attract citizens to these areas and make them aware of the opportunities these abandoned buildings provide. During the weekend, people can visit the vacant buildings and appreciate the heritage value. The Vilafranca Housing Agency organises guided tours, while explaining the public rehabilitation programme 'From empty buildings to social housing.'



### DESCRIPTION OF KEY COMPONENTS

To carry out this activity, the city of Vilafranca:

- Books artists for music and family events (circus, juggling, bouncy castle, music, etc)
- Communicates with owners to allow access to the buildings for guided tours
- Publishes information about the programme 'From empty buildings to social housing'
- Organises guided tours

### SUCCESS FACTORS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPLICATION

Approaching citizens to raise their awareness about the heritage values of the vacant buildings and empower them to make use of the opportunities these buildings present.



## INITIATOR & KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Initiator: City council of Vilafranca

Key stakeholders: Public Housing Agency, urban planning department, owners, potential investors, potential new inhabitants of the buildings

## NEEDED RESOURCES

Staff of two persons with working time together of minimum one day / week

Staff must be experienced in the field of urban planning, housing policies and communication



**PROJECT PERIOD** Once/twice a year

## CONTACT PERSON

Vilafranca del Penedes town hall

**Eugènia Martínez**  
[emartinez@vilafranca.org](mailto:emartinez@vilafranca.org)



# 'USE IN' festival

## – Seraing, Belgium



### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A 200-year-old industrial site situated in the heart of Seraing is to be requalified and reused in the next years. To allow citizens to discover this historic site and its historic halls, which are usually closed to the public, every weekend during the summer break (2017-2020), the place is transformed into a cultural space with exhibitions and musical, cultural and gastronomic events. Access is free and accessible to all and a playground for the youngest participants is also available.

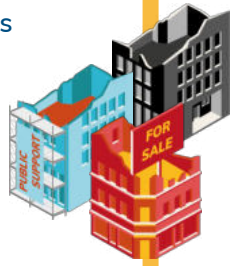
The intentions are to use art and culture as levers for economic and social dynamism in the neighbourhood, to give life to the site while waiting for the final project to take place and to inform people about the future of the site and the future of the neighbourhood (Master Plan of Seraing Valley) through the installation of an information booth posted in the entrance of the industrial hall.

### DESCRIPTION OF KEY COMPONENTS

Eriges, an autonomous municipality-owned company, is in charge of the implementation and coordination of the project in collaboration with the city services (communication, works, and authorisation). The first year, Eriges launched a public call for tender for the organisation and management of the festival. A collective of professional artists was selected to be in charge of the organisation and communication, as well as contacting artists and organizations for the events.



From the second year on, Eriges was directly involved in finding and selecting the artists and organizations. Many of them had heard about the first edition and were eager to participate.



### SUCCESS FACTORS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPLICATION

The success of this project is growing annually thanks to:

- The opening of a special place with character that people are happy to discover
- Original, unique programme, attractive and fun
- Attraction through temporary events
- Free and accessible to all
- Afternoon and night events
- Wide and varied communication by various sources (city, Eriges, organizers) that reaches diverse and sometimes distant audiences
- Use of social networks through the City of Seraing, Eriges, and the artists and event organizers

A good communication plan is important especially for the first year. Use all partners' social networks. The biggest challenge was to get access to electricity and water on an industrial brownfield. Don't forget the security process necessary for any event organization.

### INITIATOR & KEY STAKEHOLDERS

**Initiator:** Eriges - Autonomous municipality-owned company for the City of Seraing

**Key stakeholders:** City of Seraing, various artists and event organizers

### NEEDED RESOURCES

- The City provides no budget but it does offer support (material and personnel)
  - Free access to the site (City property)
  - Containers for the bar and information areas
  - Security barriers
  - Communication support
  - Participation of works department, authorization for organisation of public event
- Eriges provides a budget of about € 5,000 and personnel
  - Second-hand furniture and decoration
  - Electricity costs
  - Communication support
  - Project coordination
- Each organiser is in charge of
  - Specific communication for its own event
  - Layout, design and specific needed equipment
  - Security staff
  - Cleaning of the site
- Access is free but organisers benefit from the bar's profit
- Water is provided free of charge by the local supplier

### FURTHER INFORMATION / EXAMPLES IN THE WEB

<https://www.facebook.com/USEINseraing/>

**PROJECT PERIOD** Weekends of July and August (2017-2020)

### CONTACT PERSON

Eriges

**Renaud Chaput**  
rchaput@eriges.be  
**Bénédicte Borckmans**  
bborckmans@eriges.be

# Legal tools to reactivate buildings and flats







# Legal tools to reactivate vacant buildings and flats

**Vilafranca** presents an interesting approach in which they correlate their municipal registry of inhabitants with data from the water supply company to detect and monitor empty flats. The results are verified through site inspections.

In **Riga**, tax fines and incentives are applied at the same time. Tax fines are levied for buildings in a poor condition and tax incentives are granted for owners who make their buildings available to NGOs and for the renovation of vacant buildings. The commission for the inspection of degraded buildings, which decides on the application of these tools, plays a central role in this process.

In **Constanta**, tax fines of up to 500% are applied for buildings in disrepair and/or which are vacant. The decision is made by the city council based on classifications and monitoring from the

local police department based on the technical criteria outlined in a previous section. In a number of cases, the application of the tax fine has led to the rehabilitation of the building or that the building was sold.

**Chemnitz** uses foreclosures by court order as a strategic tool in difficult situations with vacant buildings to restart their future development. The foreclosure is used to activate owners, support ownership change and settle debts.

**Vilafranca** uses the tool of right of first refusal in combination with a nearly zero-interest credit from the regional government to gain possession of (vacant) buildings and expand the municipal social housing stock.

Most other ALT/BAU partners also apply tax tools to stimulate the reactivation and rehabilitation of vacant buildings.





# Tax fines and incentives for rehabilitation and civic use

## – Riga, Latvia



### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

#### Tax increase for degraded buildings

The city of Riga can apply a property tax increase for buildings classified as degraded by the Commission for the Inspection of Degraded Buildings. The tax increase is to encourage the rehabilitation of the building.

#### Tax reduction for building renovation

The city of Riga can grant a property tax reduction for owners depending on the level of building renovation works carried out. These works have to be performed in accordance with the procedures specified in a regulatory enactment of the local council and have to be completed after 31 December 2013. The tax reduction is to encourage the renovation of building facades.

#### Tax reduction for offering buildings to NGOs

The city of Riga grants a property tax reduction of up to 90 % for owners whose buildings are permanently and solely used by public benefit organizations. This is to support NGOs.

### DESCRIPTION OF KEY COMPONENTS

#### Tax increase for degraded buildings

The Commission for the Inspection of Degraded Buildings classifies degraded buildings based on pictures taken by the property department which monitors buildings in Riga and/or via the website [grausti.riga.lv](http://grausti.riga.lv), in which residents can report degraded buildings. A building can be classified as degraded in three categories:

- A. High risk to public safety (buildings that have totally or partly collapsed or are in a bad technical state which endangers the public);
- B. Potential risk to public safety (buildings that are a potential threat to the public safety because of their bad technical state);
- C. No danger to public safety (buildings that are degrading the image of the city).

The Commission decides whether a 3% property tax increase is to be applied to stimulate the owner to conduct refurbishment works. The owner is informed via an official letter about the decision requesting them to become active and demonstrating potential support.

#### **Tax reduction for building renovation**

To receive the tax reduction, the building must be located in specific areas of Riga or have a specific status, for example:

- historic centre of Riga;
- state established protection zone;
- UNESCO heritage;
- state protected cultural monument

The property tax reduction amounts to:

- 50% if a full renovation of the (wooden) building's facade including decorative lighting of the facade is carried out;
- 70% if complete refurbishment of the building including decorative lighting of the facade is carried out;
- 90% if complete refurbishment of the wooden building including decorative lighting of the facade is carried out.

The decorative lighting has to be in permanent operation during the dark hours.

For the tax reduction, the owner or a representative submits an electronic application for the assessment of the rehabilitation work in accordance with the procedures provided in the regulatory enactment after the works are completed. Riga's City Construction Board evaluates the application and provides a note in Riga's City Councils Uniform Information System if the tax reduction can be granted or not. The tax reduction is valid for 5 years as long as the conditions for the tax reduction are met.

#### **Tax reduction for making buildings available to NGOs**

The tax reduction is granted for buildings and land. The amount of the tax benefit to one person during the tax year shall not exceed 90% of the property tax or € 5,000. For the tax benefit, the owner has to submit an application to the Municipal revenue board together with documents proving that the property is used by a public benefit organisation. The tax reduction is valid as long as the requirements of the tax reduction are met.

### **SUCCESS FACTORS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPLICATION**

The application procedures are quite easy and simple and do not produce a large administrative burden. In addition, the tax incentive ensures that the tax waived is invested in the renovation of the building and that building space is provided to NGOs in Riga.

For the property tax increase, a regular monitoring of the buildings through site visits of the property department is important.

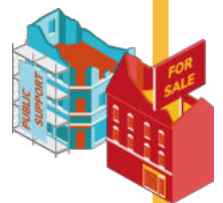
#### **INITIATOR & KEY STAKEHOLDERS**

Initiator: owners, NGOs, citizens, property department

Key stakeholders: relevant institutions of Riga's City Council

#### **NEEDED RESOURCES**

Human resources, but most of the work is part of the official duties of the respective institution or employee.



#### **FURTHER INFORMATION / EXAMPLES IN THE WEB**

<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/312246-nekustama-ipasuma-nodokla-atvieglojumu-pieskirsanas-kartiba-riga>

#### **CONTACT PERSON**

Riga City Council Property Department

**Viliams Vroblevskis**  
Viliams.Vroblevskis@riga.lv

# Tax fine to stimulate reactivation of buildings

## – Constanta, Romania



### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Since 2016, Constanța Municipality can apply a property tax increase of up to 500 % to buildings that are derelict according to the national tax code. The decision is made by the local council based on monitoring by the local police department.

### DESCRIPTION OF KEY COMPONENTS

Based on technical criteria approved by the local council, the local police department monitors and photographs every building in the old town through site visits twice a year. The point-based results are recorded on an evaluation sheet for each building. In the future, the data will be uploaded directly in an ArcGis database using GIS apps during the site visits.

Depending on the scoring results from the monitoring, the degraded buildings are classified in two groups:

1. **Neglected buildings for which a fine can be imposed, but no property tax increase.**  
The owner of the building is fined every three months (€ 100-200 for physical persons, € 200-300 for legal entities) until they start repair works (no building permit necessary) or the rehabilitation (with a building permit);
2. **Neglected buildings for which a fine and a property tax increase can be imposed.**  
According to the scoring results from the monitoring (physical state), the buildings are classified into three categories:
  - Category 3: buildings with a 300% property tax increase,
  - Category 2: buildings with a 400% property tax increase,
  - Category 1: buildings with a 500% property tax increase.





The local police department informs the owner of a degraded building about the results and sets up a 6-month deadline to get a building / rehabilitation permit and to declare the start of rehabilitation works.

If the deadline is respected and works have started, a conformity report is drawn up and the building is monitored until the end of the rehabilitation works. Derelict buildings that have a building permit and have announced the commencement of rehabilitation works are excluded from a property tax increase. In case the deadline is not respected and the building qualifies for a property tax increase according to the criteria, the local police department informs the city hall. They can apply a property tax increase of up to 500% depending on the monitoring score.

The technical criteria for the classification of derelict buildings concern the physical conditions of the building and its direct surroundings, which are divided into minor, normal and major degradation:

- Building envelope: roof, façade
- Structural weaknesses visible from the outside: roof frame, walls, enclosure
- Immediate surrounding: state of the road, infrastructure, public space, function

### SUCCESS FACTORS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPLICATION

After the application of the property tax increase, some owners of derelict buildings requested building permits and announced the commencement of rehabilitation works; other buildings have been sold to private owners willing to rehabilitate.

In the case of listed buildings, it is recommended to involve the department responsible for the protection of monuments and provide owners with advice about preservation and restoration measures.

### INITIATOR & KEY STAKEHOLDERS

*Initiator:* The application of property tax increase is initiated by the municipality through the local police department based on technical criteria set up by the local council. The local council then makes two decisions:

- A general decision regarding a property tax increase of up to 500% for derelict buildings based on the criteria for assessing the physical condition of buildings;
- A decision for each building evaluated on which the increase of the property tax is to be applied.

*Key stakeholders:* Local police department, owners of buildings, local council

### NEEDED RESOURCES

- Two local police personnel with building construction experience
- A local council decision regarding the increase of the property tax of up to 500% for derelict buildings based on the criteria for assessing the physical condition of buildings



### PROJECT PERIOD

Since 2006 (ongoing)

### CONTACT PERSON

City Hall of Constanța, The Local Police Department, Local officer

**Mircea Săulea,**  
[mircea.saulea@primaria-constanta.ro](mailto:mircea.saulea@primaria-constanta.ro)



# Foreclosures to restart the future of abandoned buildings – Chemnitz, Germany



## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Foreclosure (auction by court order) is a legal procedure in Germany applied by creditors to settle registered debts with a property owner. It seeks to balance the interests of debtors and creditors. Comparable measures exist in other national legal contexts. For the revitalisation of unused and dilapidated properties it can be an effective and strategic tool for cities to move forward with difficult cases, to clear the plot's land register from often extensive debts, to get hold of strategic properties or to find new owners.

## DESCRIPTION OF KEY COMPONENTS

Usually, the procedure takes the following course:

1. After contacting a debtor without result, the city's tax department (or another creditor) requests a foreclosure at the local court. It can be applied to plots (with and without buildings), buildings, single flats or other property constellations. Debts may consist of burdens in the land register (at least € 750) and/or property tax arrears.
2. After approval of the formalities, the court orders the foreclosure and commissions an expert valuation of the market value.
3. Foreclosure details (date, place, etc.) and a report about the property are published at least six weeks before the auction (e.g. on [www.zvg-portal.de](http://www.zvg-portal.de) and in local gazettes).
4. At this stage at the latest, Chemnitz's 'Housing agency' takes over coordination activities. These may include the distribution of information, contacting potential buyers, site visits, or outreach and coordination with relevant stakeholders.
5. Public auction at court (guidelines: minimum bid, value thresholds, deposits, etc.). The person offering the highest bid becomes the owner of the property. If the bid is lower than 50% of the official value, the court can deny the sale; if it is lower than 30% of the official value, the creditor can deny the sale. In this case, the auction is repeated at a later date without these thresholds.
6. Distribution of the sales price among the listed/registered creditors.

There is another special form of auctions by court order in Germany in case of divided ownership (e.g. resulting from inheritance) and the possibility for one of the heirs to sort



out ownership. The procedures described are comparable to those described above. Furthermore, foreclosures are not to be mistaken with public auctions on the free market that are initiated by the owner.

### SUCCESS FACTORS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPLICATION

- Foreclosures are a powerful and strategic tool as ultima ratio in difficult situations. If carried out, they are an effective means to conclusively settle a situation with an owner or complex property situations.
- If initiated by the city government, the administrative effort can be significant with often difficult legal implications.
- One key advantage is that through foreclosures, buildings usually change ownership without any registered debts if the procedure is initiated by the city government.
- The “tool” is only partly effective to initiate a desired future development for two main reasons: 1. There is only very limited influence who buys the building at auction and 2. The purely financial award criterion at the auction encourages property speculation.
- Coordination activities by the city or partners like Chemnitz’s ‘Housing Agency’ can help match new owners with derelict properties. However, these parties’ success at auction is a significant hurdle and a key reason why coordination activities are not always successful.
- Cities may use foreclosures as a strategic tool for the acquisition of properties and thus actively take part in the future development of the plots and buildings.
- The dynamics and achieved prices at the auctions often reflect the current market dynamics (e.g. rising real estate prices, especially for buildings with potential tax refunds for renovation).
- Auctions have emerged as good places for networking, i.e. to get to know the buyer and other bidders. This can be a good springboard for active cooperation.

### INITIATOR & KEY STAKEHOLDERS

**Initiator:** The initiator for foreclosures is the creditor, which can be a city administration (e.g., tax department), a bank, or other public or private creditors with registered and valued debts in the property’s land register. The creditor initiates the formal foreclosure procedure with the local court which takes the procedure forward.

**Key stakeholders:** Both sides of the process, the creditors (city administration, banks, etc.) and the debtors (property owners or their representatives), have rights and obligations in the process. Through the foreclosure procedure these are weighed and settled – either through the settlement of debts by the debtor or through public auction.

### NEEDED RESOURCES

- Knowledge of formal procedures
- Communication between relevant departments in the city administration (e.g., tax department, building control, urban planning)
- Time to engage in coordination activities (communication, site visits, attendance of the auctions, etc.) and transparency in those activities

### FURTHER INFORMATION / EXAMPLES IN THE WEB

[www.zvg-portal.de](http://www.zvg-portal.de) (German central publication website of foreclosure dates and procedures)  
<https://publikationen.sachsen.de/bdb/artikel/10637/documents/37342>  
(information brochure in German on foreclosure procedures by the Free State of Saxony)

### CONTACT PERSON

Information on application and experiences with foreclosures related to vacant and/or dilapidated properties in Chemnitz: Agentur StadtWohnen Chemnitz/ WGS mbH

**Martin Neubert**  
neubert@stadtwohnen-chemnitz.de

# Right of first refusal to facilitate acquisition of affordable housing

– Vilafranca del Penedes, Spain



## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Municipalities and social entities which are part of the Social Inclusion Housing Network of Catalonia can acquire dwellings with a preferential right over any housing transaction as a result of a mortgage foreclosure process. In support for the purchase, the municipalities and social entities receive a nearly zero interest credit from the regional Catalan government. This is an advantageous opportunity for local administrations to expand their municipal social housing stock.

## DESCRIPTION OF KEY COMPONENTS

The Regional Catalan Government communicates with local administrations by email about properties subject to foreclosure. The local administration visits the buildings. If it is interested in exercising the right of first refusal, it informs the regional government through the corresponding platform. For the purchase, the regional government grants a nearly zero interest credit. Having purchased the property, Vilafranca City Council manages the houses.

### Background

Framework agreement for the acquisition of social housing between the Catalan Institute of Finances and the Housing Agency of Catalonia.

- Funding of up to € 80,000 (total cost)
- Term: 25 years (1 year capital shortfall)
- Fixed rate bonus: 1.25 %
- The Housing Agency of Catalonia bonuses the remaining 2%.

## SUCCESS FACTORS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPLICATION

Vilafranca and Hàbitat3 (member of the ULG) have successfully exercised this right on different occasions, obtaining homes at very good prices. The nearly zero interest credit from the regional government for the purchase is key.

Recommendations:

- Check out foreclosure offers
- Visit the buildings/flats beforehand!
- Make an analytical assessment of the house in terms of its location, price, refurbishment costs

## INITIATOR & KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Initiator: Government of Catalonia

Key stakeholders: Local administrations, third sector entities (non-profit)

## NEEDED RESOURCES

- Staff monitoring the offers available once a week.
- Staff experienced in housing and social policies and urban development who can assess the status of the buildings.
- Time to visit the buildings.

Budget required for:

- Purchase and sales tax
- Rehabilitation of the building



## FURTHER INFORMATION / EXAMPLES IN THE WEB

[http://web.gencat.cat/ca/tramits/tramits-temes/20200-Dret\\_Tanteig\\_Retracte?category=747fd95a-a82c-11e3-a972-000c29052e2c](http://web.gencat.cat/ca/tramits/tramits-temes/20200-Dret_Tanteig_Retracte?category=747fd95a-a82c-11e3-a972-000c29052e2c)

## CONTACT PERSON

Vilafranca del Penedes City Council

Eugènia Martínez  
[emartinez@vilafranca.org](mailto:emartinez@vilafranca.org)

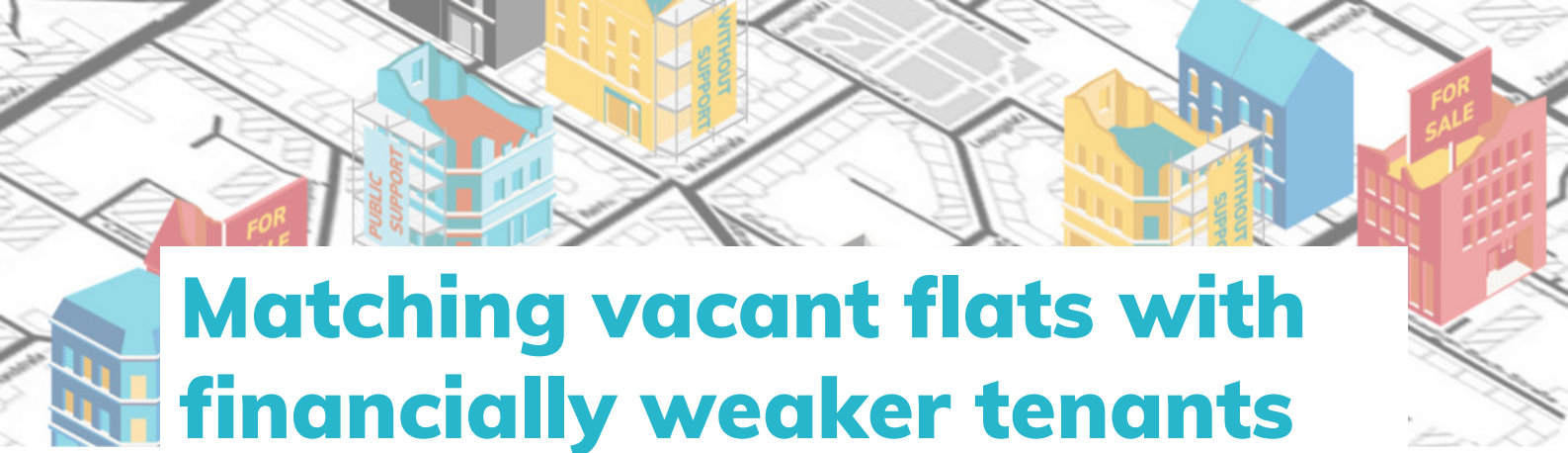
## PROJECT PERIOD

Since 2015 (ongoing)



# Matching vacant flats with financially weaker tenants





# Matching vacant flats with financially weaker tenants

**Turin** has a variety of projects that focus on matching owners of vacant flats with financially weaker tenants.

A very interesting example is **Stesso Piano**, a service provided by a social cooperative in collaboration with a bank foundation, providing cohabitation for students and young workers by matching them with the owners of vacant flats.

Another example is **AlloggiAMI**, a non-profit project, offering foreign students, visiting professors and interns accommodation at an affordable price in empty or underused apartments. These apartments are owned by former workers

who can improve their income through renting out rooms and apartments.

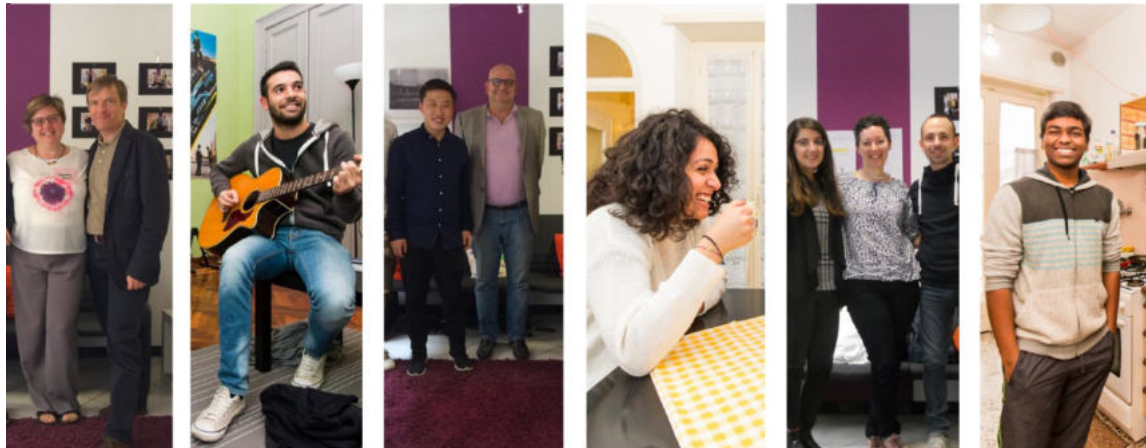
**Lo.C.A.Re.**, by the City of Turin, is a service project to support the matching of owners of empty apartments with tenants. It seeks to provide housing to tenants following a previous eviction after the completion of the lease term or after a faultless default, for those living in accommodations certified as of unsuitable quality by the municipality, as well as in particular housing emergency situations. It is a free service with non-repayable incentives for owners.



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# Providing youth cohabitation in vacant flats – Stesso Piano

– Turin, Italy



**STESSO PIANO**  
DOVE GIOVANI COABITANTI E PROPRIETARI SI INCONTRANO



## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Stesso Piano, a service provided by a social cooperative in collaboration with a bank foundation, assists the matching of young people aged 18-35 who are interested in cohabitation and looking for rooms to rent with owners of vacant flats. It offers apartments in Turin and accompanies flatmates and owners in matching and writing the rental agreements.

## DESCRIPTION OF KEY COMPONENTS

Stesso Piano offers to find flatmates for cohabitation and to “matchmake” with an owner willing to rent to them via their local office and website.

The service is available only to members of Stesso Piano. Membership is free. When a contract with the owner and the others flat mates is signed, the member has to pay an annual fee of € 190.

Stesso Piano offers tenants an honour loan of up to € 1,500 without interest or additional costs to cover the deposit, first month of rent, furniture purchases, etc. The honour loan is funded by [Compagnia di San Paolo](#).

Stesso Piano offers owners:

- Mediation, legal and tax advice
- Guaranteed fund of up to € 3,000 for damages and arrears valid for the duration of the contract
- Bonus of € 800 for owners who decide to stipulate contracts with agreed fees and a bonus for young workers
- Accompanying owners in refurbishing and reactivating apartments



Stesso Piano became known thanks to a massive promotional campaign promoted by the City of Turin targeting at students and private owners. It collaborates with the main associations of private owners. Over time, Stesso Piano also has become well-known thanks to word of mouth among owners. Stesso Piano is financed by Compagnia di San Paolo. It annually supports the management and ensures the resources for the guarantee fund and incentives for owners. From 2008 to 2014, the financial support amounted to € 830,000.

### SUCCESS FACTORS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPLICATION

- Continuous counselling service for owners and tenants during the entire lease period
- Gaining confidence of owners by guaranteeing good services and sharing the good experience (thematic workshops for owners, i.e. home staging)

### INITIATOR & KEY STAKEHOLDERS

**Initiator:** The project was started in 2008 by the Housing Program of Compagnia di San Paolo bank foundation and was promoted by two local NGOs: Associazione Ylde and Cooperativa Tenda Servizi.

**Key stakeholders:** Since 2012, Stesso Piano is managed by Cooperativa DOC, a social cooperative specialized in promoting initiatives for youngsters, in collaboration and with the support of Compagnia di San Paolo.

### NEEDED RESOURCES

- 4 full-time employees
- Coordinator
- 1 person responsible for mediation/leases/legal & tax advice
- Dedicated employee for student help desk
- Dedicated employee for owner help desk



### FURTHER INFORMATION / EXAMPLES IN THE WEB

[www.stessopiano.it](http://www.stessopiano.it)  
<http://bit.ly/2qUXnGQ>

**PROJECT PERIOD**  
Since 2008 (ongoing)

### CONTACT PERSON

Stesso Piano

**Elisa Gallo, project coordinator**  
[elisa.gallo@stessopiano.it](mailto:elisa.gallo@stessopiano.it)



# Student Housing in empty flats – AlloggiAMI

## – Turin, Italy



### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

AlloggiAMI is a non-profit project funded and run by the Associazione ARIS, led by Tecla Zaia. It offers foreign students, visiting professors and interns the possibility to find accommodation at a low price in Mirafiori Sud, a neighbourhood mostly inhabited by former workers of the Fiat car industry. As Fiat factories were closed in the past, many units in Mirafiori are empty or occupied by elderly people (former workers) with large apartments. By matching foreign students who are looking for accommodation at an affordable price with owners of empty or large apartments, a cultural mix in the neighbourhood is promoted and owners have the possibility to improve their income by accommodating students in their apartments. At the same time, empty spaces are used again and the neighbourhood is inhabited by a new population of young and active people.

### DESCRIPTION OF KEY COMPONENTS

Interested students can fill in an [online](#) accommodation request. Based on the provided data, AlloggiAMI checks for a match and the availability of a suitable lodging. The proposal is sent to the applicant via email with photos of the apartment. If the applicant agrees on the proposal, they pay a down payment and AlloggiAMI organizes the contractual proceeding. Students and owners pay subscription fees to the ARIS Association and donations are also welcome.

The housing offer is mainly single or double rooms in shared apartments with other students or with a local family. The duration of the rent contract is minimum three months. The rent is paid monthly and there is no deposit fee.

In addition, the project offers further activities in the neighbourhood such as yoga, meditation, discounts, rental bikes, ethnic dinners, co-working spaces, etc.

The project is run by Tecla Zaia, president of the ARIS association. She lives in Mirafiori Sud. When the project started, owners were activated by Tecla herself through word of mouth and posters around the neighbourhood.

### SUCCESS FACTORS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPLICATION

- Offer of a set of activities/services addressed both to students and residents/owners to promote cultural mix and shared use of spaces and opportunities i.e., co-working space, bicycles to rent, discounts at local events (gym, yoga, workshops, etc.), open-air cinema, parties, community dinners.
- Networking with universities and local associations to spread the news and attract students
- Community building: organizing parties, concerts, barbecues, etc.

### INITIATOR & KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Initiator: Associazione Aris - Tecla Zaia

Key stakeholders: Funding: Fondazione Mirafiori ONLUS, Compagnia di San Paolo and Fondazione CRT (bank foundations), Circoscrizione 2 (the district which includes Mirafiori Sud neighbourhood; funding and facilitating)

### NEEDED RESOURCES

An office in Mirafiori Sud next to the co-working space managed by two full-time employees and a volunteer team. € 15,000 to implement the project and manage the co-working space, additional € 8,000 for hardware funded by Compagnia di San Paolo and Fondazione CRT (2017).



### FURTHER INFORMATION / EXAMPLES IN THE WEB

<https://www.alloggiami.com>

### PROJECT PERIOD

Since 2012 (ongoing)

### CONTACT PERSON

AlloggiAMI aps  
Associazione Aris

Tecla Zaia, president  
[info@alloggiami.com](mailto:info@alloggiami.com)

# Social agency for residential contracted and assisted leases – Lo.C.A.Re.

– Turin, Italy



## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Lo.C.A.Re. has contributed significantly to renting out private empty apartments: 5,000 private contracts have been signed in 18 years.

For this, the City of Turin has set up the service project Lo.C.A.Re. in order to support the matching of owners of empty apartments with tenants following a previous eviction for finished lease or for faultless default, tenants whose current accommodation is inadequate (unsuitable conditions certified by the municipality) or during particular housing emergency situations. It is free of charge and with one-off and non-repayable incentives.

## DESCRIPTION OF KEY COMPONENTS

Lo.C.A.Re. is a public office, set up by the municipality of Turin which:

- Collects the registrations (one year duration) of owners and tenants via the [Lo.C.A.Re. website](#) and phone
- Matches owners/apartments with suitable tenants from among the registered members based on tenant's income and family composition
- Inquires about the compliance of the apartment with the housing guidelines by submitting a questionnaire to owners and asking the tenants about the initial state of the art of the rented apartment. Owners and tenants are responsible for their own declarations. In case of discordance, Lo.C.A.Re. verifies the apartment directly
- Writes the contract between the owner and the tenant
- Grants the owner a financial incentive of € 2,000 (plus consulting and writing of the contract for free) and a guarantee on possible back rent



- Grants a contribution in favour of tenants to help them paying their rent
- Supports tenants through the entire process

### SUCCESS FACTORS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPLICATION

- Enabling the contact between owners and potential tenants after having selected a specific tenant for a given apartment. Owner and tenant meet autonomously visiting the apartment together. Afterwards they meet with Lo.C.A.Re. to fix the contract.
- Guaranteeing continuous and free support throughout the entire process of housing assignment for both owners and tenants.
- Providing incentives for owners and contributions for tenants.
- Making the service known by taking part at local events to inform about the offer and services. Word of mouth and the Lo.C.A.Re. website are also important information channels.
- The following information is provided by the owner and the tenant:
- Owners provide a floor plan, number of rooms, bathrooms, lift and if they have a security door
- Tenants provide the number of family members, eventual disabilities and particular health conditions and proof of their new apartment need (s. project description)

### INITIATOR & KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Initiator: City of Turin

Key stakeholders: Social housing department, private owners

### NEEDED RESOURCES

A staff of 5 persons working full time. The staff has administrative competences and strong negotiation skills.

In 2018, the budget for incentives and contributions was € 2.76 Mio. (€ 1.713 Mio. for owner incentives and € 1.047 Mio. for tenant contributions). The budget is composed mainly of regional funds and in a minor part of municipal ones.



### FURTHER INFORMATION / EXAMPLES IN THE WEB

<http://www.comune.torino.it/locare/>  
<http://mri.hu/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Magnano-Giovanni-Lo.C.A.Re-Torino.pdf>

### PROJECT PERIOD

Since 2020 (ongoing)

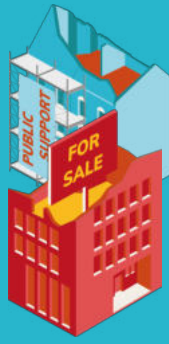
### CONTACT PERSON

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# Using vacant buildings and flats to provide affordable housing





# Using vacant buildings and flats to provide affordable housing

**Rybnik** and **Villafranca** have similar examples to using vacant buildings and flats to provide affordable housing. The two approaches share the aspect that, through the (future) tenant's own contribution to the renovation of the apartment, it is made available to them at an affordable price. This approach also enables owners who are not able to finance the renovation of their flat to put their empty flat back into use and avoid further deterioration.

The city of **Rybnik** offers future tenants the ability to renovate an apartment at their own cost. Tenants can rent a flat for € 1 / m<sup>2</sup> plus utility costs. Eligible tenants must meet certain income criteria and must document the financial capacity to cover the renovation costs.

**Vilafranca** has set up the project *Masoveria Urbana*. It is an agreement under which the owner of a vacant property transfers the use of the property to a tenant free of charge. In return, the tenant carries out necessary rehabilitation works. The municipality acts as an intermediary between owner and tenant.

Another very interesting example is Vilafranca's good practice *From empty houses to social inclusion*. This project links the reuse of empty flats with social inclusion. The rehabilitation of the empty flats is used to train unemployed people in that sector and the rehabilitated flats are provided for rent to low-/no-income households. Further information on this project can be found [here](#).



# 'Flat for Refurbishment'

## – Rybnik, Poland



### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

To increase the refurbishment rate of publicly-owned vacant flats in need of rehabilitation, the city of Rybnik offers future tenants the ability to renovate the apartment at their own cost. They can rent the flat for € 1 / m<sup>2</sup> plus utility costs.



### DESCRIPTION OF KEY COMPONENTS

The city informs about available flats for renovation via their website. Interested tenants can apply for the renovation of the flat. They have to prove that they meet the income criteria (160-300% of the lowest retirement pension) and also their financial capacity to cover the renovation costs. In addition, they have to confirm that they have no ownership right for another flat. If several people apply for the same flat, the person with the most points is awarded the flat (point for income, small yardage, disability, etc.).



Once a tenant joins the programme, the scope of renovation and the renovation time are specified in a contract between the municipality housing agency and the future tenant. The renovation time cannot exceed 5 months. In the event that the tenant cannot meet the renovation deadline, they must pay a compensation for non-contractual use of the flat on a monthly basis. During the renovation of the flat, the future tenant does not have to pay rent, just utility costs (energy, gas, water, waste). When the renovation is finished, a commission verifies the scope and quality of the work. If everything is fine, the rent agreement between the municipal housing agency and the tenant is concluded.

### SUCCESS FACTORS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPLICATION

"Flat for Refurbishment" is one of the major ways to rent a city-owned flat due to the following factors:

- Considerable interest of future tenants who cannot afford to rent a flat in the private market. In exchange for carrying out the renovation, they can rent city-owned flats, paying the rent according to communal rental rates.
- Supporting the municipality in renovation of empty flats and buildings and thus satisfying the housing needs of the local community.

The terms of the "renovation contract" need to maintain a good balance between the interests of all parties (developing principles of cooperation that are mutually beneficial for both parties):

- Future tenant: rent relief for the time of renovation; the possibility of extending the renovation period in justified cases; guarantee for the tenant to rent the flat after renovation is completed.
- Landlord: right to terminate the contract in case the tenant fails to comply with the terms of the contract.

### INITIATOR & KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Initiator: City of Rybnik

Key stakeholders: Municipality Housing Agency (ZGM), potential tenants .

### NEEDED RESOURCES

The Municipality Housing Agency (ZGM) has a staff with professional background in the field of housing administration.

### FURTHER INFORMATION / EXAMPLES IN THE WEB

[www.zgm.rybnik.pl](http://www.zgm.rybnik.pl)

### PROJECT PERIOD

Since 2017 (ongoing)

### CONTACT PERSON

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# Free temporary housing in exchange for refurbishment: Masoveria Urbana

– Vilafranca del Penedes, Spain



## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In Catalan tradition, there is a concept called “masoveria” that refers to an agreement according to which an owner transfers the use of a house in the countryside to a tenant free of charge. In exchange, the tenant takes care of the land and fields of the property. So called “Urban farmhousing” initiatives (Masoveria Urbana) try to adapt this custom to the city: Buildings which require improvement and maintenance works – which are often vacant – are rented by the owner for a certain period of time free of charge. In return, the tenant carries out necessary rehabilitation works.



## DESCRIPTION OF KEY COMPONENTS

To make owners and tenants aware of this model the municipality advertises it on their website and does press releases. It has a list of interested owners and tenants. Owners/flats and tenants that seem to match are invited to a first meeting. If they come to a general agreement, the municipality helps them in elaborating a leasing contract and during the other steps in the process. If needed, the municipality acts as mediator. To convince owners and tenants to take part in this model the municipality presents successful examples from the region and uses their experience.

## SUCCESS FACTORS

For tenant

- Access to housing with low initial investment
- Possibility to personalize the flat and not have the feeling of living in someone else's home
- Ideal for tenant skilled in refurbishment or renovation works

For owner

- Owner with vacant property willing to refurbish it
- Renovation of flat, even when lacking financial resources for refurbishment work
- Solution to avoid squatting or fines for empty or dilapidated buildings presenting a public danger

For public administration

- Opportunity to support (temporarily) affordable housing and the reactivation of empty flats and buildings without or with just low investments (i.e. as a mediator between owner and tenants).

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPLICATION

- The ideal profile is an empty building/flat in need of rehabilitation in order to be re-used and the rehabilitation work is of "smaller" dimension.
- Establish a lease contract that clearly specifies the rental term, works to be carried out – also in terms of quality – and all the duties and rights of both parties.
- The duration of the rental contract should correspond to the renovation work carried out in money, translating this "budget" of works into months of rental income.
- Administration's guidance e.g. as mediator, monitoring renovation works

## INITIATOR & KEY STAKEHOLDERS

*Initiator:* City council. It acts as mediator by connecting the owner and the tenant.

*Key stakeholders:*

Owners looking to refurbish their vacant housing with minimum investment.

Skilled tenants in the field of refurbishment interested in accessing housing free of charge for a certain time period in exchange for refurbishing it.

## NEEDED RESOURCES

- Public Administrations: Staff experienced in housing policies.
- Regular monitoring by the staff (as stipulated in lease contract)
- No budget needed for refurbishment works.



## FURTHER INFORMATION / EXAMPLES IN THE WEB

[https://www.diba.cat/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?uuid=705c78bf-6a3f-436d-bfde-007a81b068cf&groupId=7294824](https://www.diba.cat/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=705c78bf-6a3f-436d-bfde-007a81b068cf&groupId=7294824)

<https://elpais.com/espana/catalunya/2020-06-06/barcelona-impulsa-un-nuevo-modelo-de-vivienda-la-masoveria-urbana.html>

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/12G6hsyIAxGX9HUp3-1A23nXLtZoWRCUh/view?usp=sharing>

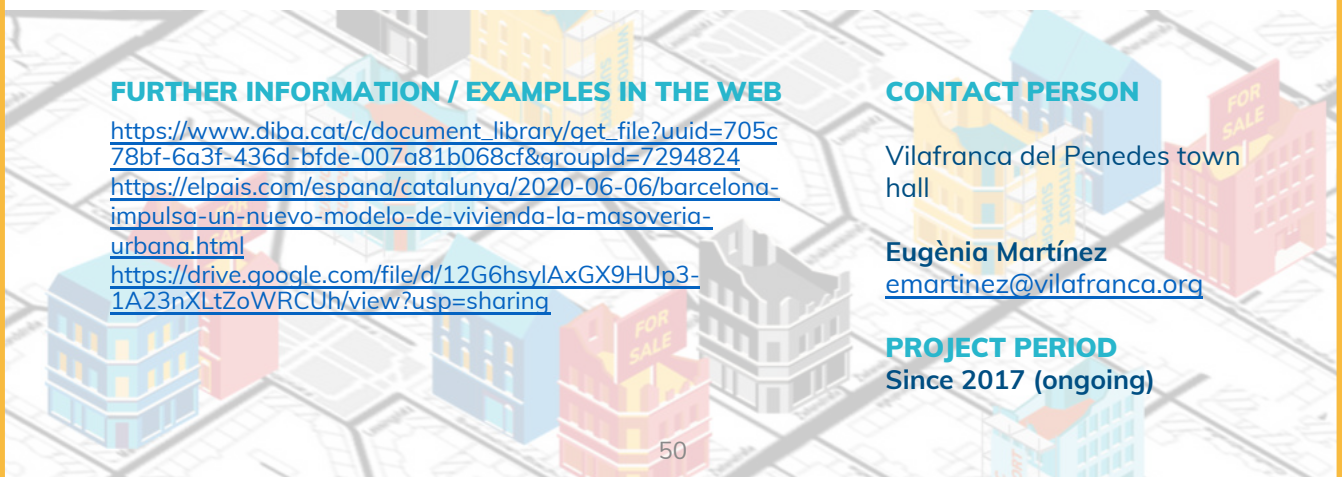
## CONTACT PERSON

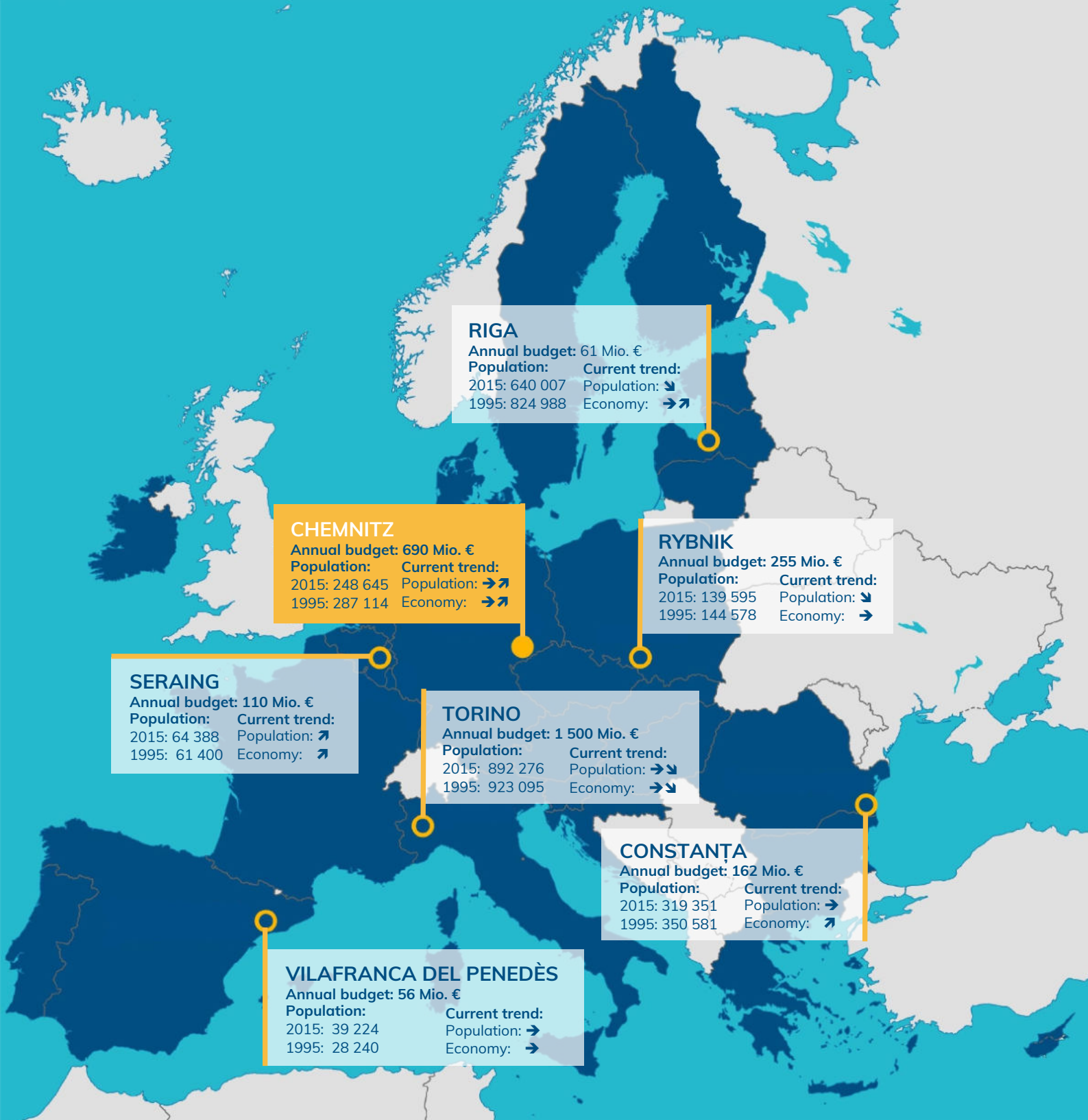
Vilafranca del Penedes town hall

Eugènia Martínez  
[emartinez@vilafranca.org](mailto:emartinez@vilafranca.org)

## PROJECT PERIOD

Since 2017 (ongoing)





## ALT/BAU network

The URBACT transfer network ALT/BAU unites seven European cities in their effort to support the reactivation and reuse of vacant residential buildings and flats in their cities by transferring and adapting the good practice model of Chemnitz's 'Housing agency.' In order to achieve this, they have met at transnational

meetings to learn and exchange about the transfer and adaptation of Chemnitz's good practice as well as other good practices from the seven partner cities. Based on this exchange, the partners have developed their own "housing agencies" adapted to their local situations.





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**This good practice compilation provides an inside view of the good practices the partners have discovered and explored during the course of the ALT/BAU network.**