

Appointment of a tenants representative in refurbishment buildings



In the framework of SINFONIA a series of residential buildings was refurbished, including refurbishment measures inside inhabited flats. In order to guarantee a transparent flow of information and to establish an environment of trust, housing agencies in Bolzano appointed the figure of a tenants` representative.

The role of the tenants` representative was taken over by the so-called "trustees", that are democratically elected by the tenants on a yearly basis in order to represent the side of the tenants in periodic meetings with the landlords. The trustees are responsible for mediation in case of conflicts and the proposal of improvements related to the building to the housing associations. He or she lives in the communal building and in most cases is known personally by the other tenants. The work of the trustees and hence the tenants` representatives are acknowledged with a small budget.

By appointing the "trustees" as tenants` representatives it was guaranteed that the choice corresponds to the tenants` expectations. In addition to their tasks as trustees the tenants` representatives, under the guide of municipality's offices, were responsible for the distribution of information material concerning the refurbishment and monitoring activities in the framework of SINFONIA and the active involvement of tenants in different activities related to the refurbishments (e.g. questionnaire surveys, monitoring of energy performance).

vision

Refurbishment of lived-in apartments requires a sensitive handling of tenants.

By appointing a representative figure from the ranks of the tenants initial resistance should be overcome.

addressed stakeholder groups

- ▶ tenants
- ▶ housing associations

outreach

Housing agencies in Bolzano refurbished six building complexes with nearly 400 apartments.

Résumé

Challenges

- ▶ The SINFONIA refurbishment plan was very complex and initial mistrust from political side and from the side of the tenants had to be overcome.
- ▶ In one “critical” building site the tenant representative had to be replaced by an employee of the Municipality of Bolzano since the appointed person became one of the biggest opponents of the refurbishment works which had a negative influence on the other tenants. Although the cooperation worked perfectly during the preparation of all construction activities and during the refurbishment on the façade and rooftop, the trustee objected the refurbishment activities that were carried out inside the lived-in apartments. Strong mediation skills were required to ease resulting conflicts among tenants, housing and construction companies.

Recommendations

- ▶ To guarantee a transparent flow of information it is recommendable to adopt a winning communication strategy for the involvement of tenants that also consider tenants` needs and desires. Tenants need to be constantly informed about the refurbishment activities.
- ▶ Pay attention to correctly inform tenants about the refurbishment activities including technical details of the devices that will be installed in their apartments, the resulting benefits and possible uneasiness to be faced during the execution of the works. The acceptance for invasive refurbishment activities is significantly higher, when tenants can anticipate them in advance.
- ▶ It is essential that the tenant representative obtains strong mediation skills. In critical cases the role of the representative should be taken over by an external neutral person that does not come from the ranks of the tenants.
- ▶ Organise regular exchange meeting with the trustees and the tenants on a monthly basis during the phase of the construction works.

“The refurbishment works are too invasive and come along with an unacceptable production of dust and excessive noise.”

“I was never told that construction companies and all the subcontractors will enter my apartment that often.”

“Construction companies have not always used sufficient precautions to limit the production of dust and noise”

“Now the building is more beautiful, more comfortable and more silent.”

Comments of tenants to their representative,
Passeggiata dei Castani



Construction site Passeggiata di Castani

