

## **IWO e.V. held a series of events in Zhytomyr within the framework of the project “Strengthening Urban Resilience in the Areas of Supply Infrastructure and Housing in Ukraine (SUR)”**

IWO e.V. has launched the second phase of the implementation of the sub-project «Strengthening of Urban Resilience in Housing»\*. Out of 17 cities that applied to participate in the project, four cities were selected: Zhytomyr, Bila Tserkva, Poltava and Kremenchuk based on the project criteria and taking into account high interest and activity of these cities during the education program.

The second stage of the subproject implementation involves the analysis and assessment of urban resilience in housing, which includes the state of the property development in the city, the development of the construction industry, the development of the management and maintenance of apartment buildings, the existing types of housing in the city and its compliance with the needs of different categories of the population.

30.06 – 02.06.2025, the IWO team conducted a working visit to Zhytomyr to study the city’s housing sector and its stakeholders, and to coordinate the goals and work plans of the project with the Zhytomyr City Council.

### **Meeting with the Secretary of the City Council, Halyna Shymanska**

The visit included meetings with the Secretary of the City Council Halyna Shymanska and her deputies, representatives of relevant departments of



the City Council and City Council members, city developers, representatives of apartment building co-owners associations (OSBB), which are strongly represented in the city, and a focus group on the needs of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Zhytomyr urban hromada. According to the Secretary of the City Council, Halyna Shymanska, the city is waiting for the housing reform to be implemented and is preparing to introduce innovations, which is why the strategy development project is highly relevant. Deputy Mayor Serhii Kondratiuk added that the first, educational stage of the project has been extremely helpful for redefining key areas of housing policy and that the city is ready to work on various aspects of the future housing strategy.

## Round table with city departments

A wide range of issues related to urban resilience in housing, including the need to implement reforms at the national level, were discussed at a round table with representatives of local government departments. As noted by the chief architect of Zhytomyr, Olha Bronshtein, there are more than 1,500 apartment buildings in the city, 80% of which were constructed in the 1970s-1990s and are dilapidated. In her opinion,

*«Currently, there is no clear division of responsibility between residents of apartment buildings and the city – who is responsible for what when it comes to the building maintenance. This results in deterioration of the buildings condition. People often rebuild or change facades without the city's permission. At the same time, cities have practically no tools for controlling this, and state construction supervision is temporarily unavailable. Besides, the laws lack a clear procedure for fulfilling obligations regarding housing maintenance – this needs to be improved.»*

According to Olha Bronshtein, this range of problems is the biggest threat to the city's resilience.

As noted by Artem Razhev, Head of the Municipal Development Department, in 2015, the city successfully implemented a reform of housing and communal



services management, resulting in a growth in the number of OSBBs from 70 in 2015 to 540 today. To this end, the city restructured existing housing maintenance offices (ZhEKs), held a competition for positions of building managers, and conducted an information campaign among residents, explaining the rights and obligations of residents and new legislation on the management and maintenance of buildings. A diversified housing management market has been introduced: there are currently nearly 30 private housing management companies operating in the city. One of the key factors was the local programme aimed at financing one type of major repairs in apartment buildings, provided that an OSBB is founded in such a building, which catalysed the changes in the forms of management in apartment buildings in the city. The success and importance of this programme were also emphasised at a meeting with representatives of the local OSBB movement. However, as some discussion participants noted, given the volume of housing needs and the number of residents, there is a great need not only for financing of the modernisation of the housing stock, but also for information campaigns and further formalisation of relations between owners, managers and local governments.

Much attention was paid to discussing the needs of IDPs in the city and the existing mechanisms for providing IDPs with temporary and permanent housing. It was also discussed which forms of housing provision are the most promising for Zhytomyr, based on previous experience. The rental housing market, like in other cities, is the main provider of housing for IDPs, but it lacks stability and transparency, which is typical for Ukraine. Viktoriia Krasnopir, Director of the Social Policy Department of Zhytomyr City Council, gave a comprehensive presentation of the available data on IDPs in the city and hypotheses regarding their successful integration and increasing the stability of households. Clearly, affordable housing and protected tenancy remain the main factors in these processes

## Meeting with city developers





The meeting with city developers was also productive. The team of experts learned about the current state of development and the history of the city's construction industry. Olena Rosenblat, a member of the city council and a representative of one of the construction companies, said that until 2016, there was practically no new construction in the city, and its rapid development began after the decentralisation reform. Currently, despite the war, construction is underway in the city, and its pace will most likely increase. In our opinion, this is why it is important to establish cooperation and effective communication between all stakeholders to ensure the sustainable development of the urban environment. It is worth noting that representatives of development companies actively support the idea of creating social housing in line with the European model they are already familiar with. As Olena Rosenblat noted, the city should have a certain amount of social housing stock at its disposal and act as a customer for its construction. The discussion participants also confirmed their interest in participating in transparent tenders for the construction of such housing. The meeting with the city developers demonstrated their openness to cooperation and interest in providing the city with social housing.

## Meeting on IDPs housing needs

Thanks to the Red Cross representative, city council member Lidia Cherednichenko, and the head of the municipal enterprise that manages various projects related to housing for IDPs, IWO experts received an overview of the situation with the accommodation of IDPs in Zhytomyr, their housing needs and problems. Similarly to other cities in Ukraine, the need for adequate housing dominates the other needs.

Raisa Cheremysyna, an employee of the Zhytomyr Red Cross Society, said,

*“If we examine the needs of this category of population, **the first priority is, of course, housing.** Everyone talks about the problems they face in our city. Many complain that they often have to move from one apartment to another, that there is not enough money [to pay rent]. The lack of reliable housing does not allow people to deal with the psychological stress caused by war and forced displacement.”*

As of mid-2025, the Red Cross provided targeted support to 2,446 people registered as IDPs. Moreover, the Society financed the creation of a modular town with 50 individual houses in the Zhytomyr urban territorial hromada. The municipal enterprise Investment Centre of the Zhytomyr City Council was assigned as the balance keeper of these houses. The houses are quite energy efficient and allow for a separate household.

It is worth noting that the city is already effectively integrating various housing for IDPs projects into a single management system (which is one of the indicators of housing resilience according to the project experts' assessment) through the mentioned municipal enterprise, demonstrating best practices. The head of the enterprise, Serhii Naumov, is already assessing the first lessons: modular towns in rural areas with their own front gardens are suitable for the retirement age group, as well as for middle-income households that have their own cars. Despite some concerns at the beginning of the project, all residents are paying their utility bills regularly. The city is working on further housing projects for IDPs.

Speaking of the project “Strengthening of Urban Resilience in Housing”, Serhii Naumov noted, “Such meetings and webinars [held at the previous stage of the project] are extremely helpful, because we still lack experience in managing social housing.” The project plans to meet with IDPs in Zhytomyr and to examine the issues related to providing IDPs with housing.



## Meeting with representatives of the OSBB movement

*«Every house has its own story, its own problems»  
Oksana Rafalska, head of the OSBB in Zhytomyr*

A separate meeting was held with representatives of the OSBB movement – active OSBB heads who are implementing the housing management reform in their apartment buildings, and are familiar with all the aspects and challenges of its implementation in practice. There are 540 buildings in the city where OSBB have been created, which is a third of the total number of apartment buildings in the city and is a high number compared to other Ukrainian cities. The head of the “Zhyto-Myr” OSBB Association Ihor Skoropad says that one of the key factors in the OSBB establishment is the already mentioned programme of co-financing the apartment buildings repairs from the local budget, which operated in the city during 2015-2020: the highest number of OSBBs was established during this programme.

Experts also say that the main problem is the panel housing stock constructed in the 70s-80s. Some buildings already have cracks and structural problems, it would be more expedient to demolish them. Most panel buildings constructed during those decades require replacement of utility networks; the elevator system presents a particular challenge (nearly a thousand elevators, according to experts, are worn out). Modernisation of part of this stock is also possible and necessary, but is complicated by both a lack of financing and owners’ personal funds, and the difficulty of coordinating the residents amidst insufficiently regulated legislation:

*“Due to the fundamental errors in the privatisation process, apartment owners have the impression that private property grants the right to any interference in everything they want and own. There is still no understanding of legislative restrictions and the need for control, understanding that an apartment building is a single whole, and changes to it must be agreed upon by the relevant body. That all works should be done with the understanding that this is a single system, not a separate apartment,» Oksana Rafalska, head of the OSBB.*

As noted by Mr. Ihor Skoropad, it is worth conducting a comprehensive technical inspection of panel buildings to identify the categories of damage and compile a comprehensive list of necessary works and costs, as well as identify which buildings pose the greatest risks. A modern and expedient approach would be to renew buildings, considering the different approaches that buildings require, on the scale of entire blocks or microdistricts, supporting this with the upgrade of utility networks and infrastructure. However, the lack of funding does not allow the implementation of this approach, so measures to preserve buildings and minimise the risks of an emergency should also be included in the strategy.

We can conclude that the city has high expertise when it comes to the management of apartment buildings, and there is a sufficient pool of experts, which has developed, primarily, from enthusiasts of the OSBB movement, which catalysed the development of this sector. There are still a few training centres in Ukraine that provide high-level education for the apartment building managers, but local experts have developed high practical expertise in the process of work and are ready to share it.

All focus group participants agree that measures to develop the capacity of the OSBB movement in the city and the responsibility of co-owners for the management and maintenance of their own homes should definitely be taken into account when developing a strategy to strengthen the resilience of the housing sector. The experts shared their own proposals and ideas for work in this direction.

The information received will form the basis of an analytical report, which will be processed by the IWO team in the coming months.





## Preliminary conclusions

According to the initial results of the project experts, Zhytomyr has a strategic outlook and is ready to act. This is confirmed by the engagement of the city's specialists during the webinars and the strategic programmes already exist.

Following the visit of Knut Höller, Executive board member of IWO e.V.,



*«Discussions with stakeholders in Zhytomyr about the local housing market and the current situation once again demonstrate that the widespread problems and challenges are well known. The housing stock is outdated and in urgent need of modernisation. Work with homeowners, and the further creation of associations of apartment building co-owners (OSBBs) should be intensified. The prospect of support through transparent procedures and financial programmes that meet the needs of homeowners is a prerequisite for progress. Local actors are extremely interested in making life in their city more comfortable. It is clear that the representatives of Zhytomyr agree that the “business as usual” approach is not working. We heard numerous opinions and positions that we can rely on in the next stages of the project. The level of discussion and the knowledge of local stakeholders provide a solid basis for this.»*

The team is grateful to all participants in the meetings for their high level of cooperation and willingness to share their expertise and data. Special thanks to the GIZ office in Zhytomyr and the municipal institution City Development Agency of the Zhytomyr City Council for organising the meetings and creating a friendly ambience. This document reflects the first impressions of the city, which will be refined after further analysis of the collected data by experts.

The meetings held during the working visit confirm the need and interest of the city to develop the Concept of Urban Resilience in Housing.

## Examples of housing stock in Zhytomyr







\* The project “Strengthening Urban Resilience in Housing” is implemented by IWO e.V. within the framework of the project “Strengthening of Urban Resilience in the Areas of Supply Infrastructure and Housing in Ukraine” (SUR) which is a part of the German transitional development assistance, commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

Photos:

Photo 1 – Zhytomyr City Council

Photo 3 – Mariia Kostenko, GIZ

Other photos – Anna Potanina, IWO e.V.

Contact: Yuliia Popova, project manager  
[popova@iwoev.org](mailto:popova@iwoev.org)