

IWO e.V. held a series of events in Poltava within the framework of the project «Strengthening of Urban Resilience in the Areas of Supply Infrastructure and Housing in Ukraine (SUR)»

IWO e.V. is launching the second phase of its activities within the Project «Strengthening of Urban Resilience in the Areas of Supply Infrastructure and Housing in Ukraine (SUR)». Out of 17 cities that applied to participate in the project, four cities were selected: Zhytomyr, Bila Tserkva, Poltava, and Kremenchuk. This stage of the subproject implementation involves the analysis and assessment of urban resilience of territorial hromadas in housing, which includes cities' housing policies and related issues. The study includes an examination of the state of the property development in the city, the development of the construction industry, areas and mechanisms for the management and maintenance of apartment buildings. The study also aims to examine the existing types of housing in the city and their compliance with the needs of different categories of the population.*

On 07–08 July 2025, the IWO team conducted a working visit to Poltava to study the city's characteristics, the features of its housing policy, learn the needs of some vulnerable population groups, and establish cooperation with the city management, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders. Another important task was to coordinate the goals and work plans of the project experts with the Poltava City Council leadership.

The first official visit was a meeting with Secretary of Poltava City Council Kateryna Yamshchikova and representatives of the city's team in charge of housing and communal services development, social security, investment and financial processes in the field of social housing. During the conversation



Photo 1.
Meeting of IWO project
experts with the Poltava City
Council leadership.

with the head of Poltava urban hromada, the project participants exchanged views. The representatives of the IWO project once again highlighted the main goals and work plans, and information was recorded regarding the intentions and requests of the Poltava administration, specifically the need to improve the city's capacity to manage the housing sector and increase the resilience of the territorial hromada during this challenging period. Information provided by the city administration regarding the challenges associated with housing for the IDPs was also clarified and discussed.

The City Council Secretary Kateryna Yamshchikova emphasised that the project is extremely helpful in terms of understanding key housing policy issues and trends, as well as prospects for solving urban housing problems in the future. The city authorities are highly interested in the project implementation, and the city wants to become a pilot project in Ukraine



Photo 2.
Meeting with Kateryna
Yamshchikova, Secretary of
Poltava City Council.

She also drew the attention of those present to the benefits of comprehensive cooperation with the IWO project in the area of social housing, as it opens new prospects for the implementation of the housing strategy for the territorial hromada.

«To this end, Poltava has active non-governmental organisations, an effective body of deputies ready for dialogue, as well as opportunities to modernise and review existing local programmes,» the secretary said.

Kateryna Yamshchikova also emphasised that the development of social housing based on modern European models is both a major challenge and a key priority, given the number of internally displaced persons in the city and families who have lost their homes. Developing an operational model and fully integrating this area of work into the city council departments is a priority.

As part of the visit, a round table was held, attended by local government officials; they discussed a wide range of issues related to the resilience of the

housing sector in Poltava. The most pressing issue mentioned was the lack of resources and opportunities for major repairs of the existing housing stock by the municipal enterprise in charge of housing management and maintenance, which operates at tariffs that have not been updated since 2018. According to local authorities, the main common problems are the dilapidated state of the housing stock, issues with utilities or their critical condition, the influx of a significant number of IDPs and the need to develop flexible housing solutions, as well as the need for changes in the management of residential stock in apartment buildings.

Amidst military threats of recent years, the biggest problem has been the inability to repair and renovate the city's housing stock using funds paid by apartment owners, and it is no longer possible to cover those expenditures with the city budget funds. In the context of implementing reforms at the national level, it is necessary to find the optimal type of housing stock management in the hromada and encourage homeowners to take a responsible attitude toward their duties to maintain private property in proper condition.



Photo 3.
Round table with
representatives of the city
council departments.

OIha Velychko, Deputy Mayor for Economy, Entrepreneurship, Social Protection, and Administrative Services, said that the hromada should continue housing management reform despite martial law. Nearly 2,000 multi-storey residential buildings are managed by the municipal enterprise ZhEO No.2 at the 2018 service tariff, which is one of the lowest in Ukraine and economically unjustified, and does not ensure the quality of maintenance and repairs. There is a need to transfer the professional maintenance of the housing stock to housing management companies that would effectively replace ZhEK (the office for housing and communal service). To this end, it is necessary to hold transparent competitions for building managers. The city authorities conducted an active information campaign among residents, explaining their rights and obligations, and the requirements of the law regarding building maintenance. However, the number of OSBBs (associations of co-owners of apartment buildings) in the city remains at 16% of all buildings and is growing very slowly.

As in other cities, the vast majority of buildings in Poltava were constructed in the 1960s and 1970s and require major repairs, energy efficiency measures, and comprehensive renovation. The city budget and residents have limited or no funds for this. Taras Panasenکو, head of the city's housing and utilities, said that the condition of the housing stock, the number of buildings, and their maintenance are a serious problem for Poltava. A large part of the housing stock is outdated or dilapidated. It is necessary to create an institutional environment in which both private companies and municipal management enterprises can engage in professional work. The market would also benefit from the presence of a modern municipal management enterprise, as it would allow the implementation of strategic housing projects with the involvement of city funding.

As Serhii Zimin reported, the city council adopted a strategic document – the Municipal Energy Plan, which was developed with the support of international organisations. It became clear that comprehensive energy efficiency measures and the transition to alternative energy sources will require huge funds. This issue can be gradually solved with the successful attraction of long-term resources.

According to officials, the level of housing deterioration in Poltava is not that high compared to other cities, and it is lower than the deterioration of utility systems. The city used to fund the repairs of the roofs, building entrances, heating and other inner utility systems in some buildings, but now there are insufficient funds to continue. Like in many cities, the situation with elevator systems is critical, and their renovation requires significant funds. In addition, there are issues with the water supply system, the sewerage collectors and pumping stations are in poor condition. Martial law has brought new and complex challenges that require measures to increase resilience and enhance security. These include equipping shelters, developing additional energy infrastructure in the residential sector, and improving cooperation between apartment owners and the city government, as well as municipal and private companies in charge of housing maintenance and service provision.



Photo 4.
Natalia Kurnakova, Head of
the City's Municipal Property
Management Department.
Andrii Karkach, Director of the
Department of Social Protection
of the Population. Tetiana Fedina,
Deputy Director of the Department
of Social Protection of the
Population.

The city's major asset is the presence of an active civil society, which is working to promote sustainable practices in building management and maintenance. According to Yuliia Horodchanina, a member of the Poltava City Council, and the Head of non-governmental organisation "NOVA UNITED", NGOs use innovative and flexible working methods and are able to find ways to reach different population groups. She believes a significant number of specialists should be constantly engaged in raising awareness, supporting buildings on the path to energy efficiency and management improvement, assisting with registration documents and similar issues. To this purpose, it is necessary to develop successful case studies. To ensure effective management of buildings, it is crucial to obtain technical passports for the utility networks and buildings, prepare project documentation, adopt municipal programmes, and provide assistance in restoring documents. Essentially, that means a one-stop-shop model. How to find the resources to complete a given volume of tasks remains unclear. Problems with curtilages (the land surrounding a building) also remain unresolved. A necessary condition is the transfer of land to the building's balance sheet, which is not yet possible:

«If we encourage people to take responsibility for the land surrounding their buildings, we should not charge them for it, because in that case, they are unlikely to share the responsibility and the burden. People have been waiting for nine years for the Cabinet of Ministers to develop a procedure for transferring land for permanent use. The hromada can try to resolve issues like this by adopting temporary measures, but this places additional responsibility on officials who should not be responsible for this. Many local government bodies adopt temporary procedures for transferring land for permanent use, take responsibility and give land for use rather than lease. This significantly simplifies the process. When building residents prepare the documents themselves and lease the land, their motivation decreases.»

An additional challenge for Poltava is the influx of more than 40,000 internally displaced persons who need housing and job opportunities, social and humanitarian services, and the development of effective approaches to



Photo 5.
Yuliia Horodchanina, a
member of the Poltava City
Council, and the Head of non-
governmental organization
"NOVA UNITED". Serhii
Zymin, a focal point for social
housing at Poltava City
Council.

facilitate their adaptation and integration into the hromada, as they want to establish their livelihoods, solve housing problems, and become engaged in socio-economic life.

The key issue is the rental housing market, as most IDPs live in this segment. Olha Velychko, Deputy Mayor for Economy, Entrepreneurship, Social Protection and Administrative Services, noted that renting housing in Poltava is very expensive. Rental costs in Poltava are high and close to those in Kyiv, and are significantly higher than in Kremenchuk, for example.

According to Andrii Karkach, Director of the Department of Social Protection,

«high housing prices are a negative phenomenon which includes two aspects. Firstly, very few people officially sign rental agreements; thus, the local budget does not receive the personal income tax from landlords. Secondly, the number of people who could stay in the hromada and integrate is decreasing. No officially registered rental agreement means that IDPs lose their right to a subsidy when renting housing.»

This situation in the rental market, which is common countrywide, has negative social consequences, in particular it hinders the integration of new populations. However, the issue of regulating the rental market is a nationwide one and cannot be resolved at the local level.

Meeting with representatives of organisations working with IDPs

Tetiana Fedina, Deputy Director of the Social Protection Department of Poltava City Council, reported that 47,300 IDPs are registered in Poltava. Of these, 41,800 people have been displaced since the start of the full-scale war, after 24 February 2022. Nearly 60% are women and 40% are men. The social groups are the following: 9,000 children under the age of 18; 22,800 people of working age; 3,400 people with disabilities; and 9,400 pensioners. Nearly 50% of all those registered are employable, and 50% are children, pensioners and people with disabilities.

In Poltava, many organisations work to support IDPs, including in housing-related matters. Representatives of these organisations say there is a high demand in for various forms of housing for IDPs – both places of emergency and temporary accommodation, as well as social housing solutions. As one discussion participant noted,

“our analysis shows that people are not leaving Poltava, they keep arriving and arriving.”

There is no comprehensive data available on the living conditions of IDPs. However, all discussion participants agreed that in most cases, IDPs rent their housing. Both representatives of the city council and experts from non-governmental organisations are concerned about the affordability of rental

housing for IDPs: Poltava has the highest rental rates in the region, and rental agreements are short-term, forcing IDPs to move frequently. Since 50% of IDPs cannot work, these rental rates are incredibly high for them, and state aid payments for IDPs do not cover the costs of living in a city like Poltava. According to employees of Caritas Poltava charitable foundation, many people are seeking assistance with rent compensation.

“These are people who have been evacuated, have minimal income, and cannot rent housing at the prices Poltava currently offers,” foundation representatives say.

Experts emphasised that, similarly to other cities, the state programme of rent compensation for IDPs does not work as landlords are unwilling to officially register the lease – only three such cases have been recorded in the city. Local organisations offer their own rent compensation programmes, under which IDP families are compensated for the first six months of rent. These programmes are highly popular. At the same time, IDPs living in temporary accommodation centres (TACs) often refuse this option because they are not sure they will be able to cover the rent after the assistance period ends, so they keep living in temporary accommodation centres on a long-term basis.

Thus, Poltava is experiencing a situation typical for cities with large IDP populations: temporary accommodation is becoming long-term accommodation. This complicates the integration of IDPs and hinders the admission of newly arrived IDPs who are in need of emergency accommodation after evacuation. Most temporary accommodation centres are established at the regional level and are subordinate to the regional administration, but there are also centres that have been created by international or local non-governmental organisations. Such centres operate in educational institutions' dorms or other municipal institutions; there is also a modular town for 400



Photos 6-7.
Representatives of
local non-governmental
organisations and
offices of international
organisations in Poltava



Photo 8.
Representatives of local non-
governmental organisations and
offices of international organisations
in Poltava

people near Poltava. The standards of living conditions in TACs in the region vary greatly. According to IDPs, they stay as long as possible in those TACs where conditions are satisfactory and minimal privacy is ensured. At the same time, remaining vacancies in TACs have the worst living conditions.

According to experts, most IDPs want to live in the city. When the civil-military administration offers options based on the list of vacancies in TACs in Poltava and the region, most people are unwilling to go to the villages because of the lack of necessary infrastructure, like transport and hospitals, and the working-age population does not consider this option due to the lack of jobs in rural communities. That is why TACs in Poltava are full. A representative of the organisation Right to Protection, which has already been working on this issue, shared a strategy: it would be wise to provide housing for pensioners in compact villages that have medical facilities, as many IDPs from this category prefer a rural lifestyle; however, they cannot move to villages due to the lack



Photo 9.
Representatives of local non-
governmental organisations
and offices of international
organisations in Poltava

of medical facilities there. The expert also shared the list of villages that meet these criteria.

Experts noted that it is necessary to take a gradual approach and develop individual solutions for different categories of the population. They mentioned that affordable rental housing for long-term residency should be a priority option, since it is impossible to provide all IDPs with free housing, and there is a significant proportion of IDPs who can cover the rent if the price is affordable.

The city has available land plots for the construction of long-term social rental housing, as well as municipal buildings that can be converted into temporary housing, the need for which remains high given the dynamics of the influx of IDPs.

In general, local organisations have accumulated a knowledge base and flexible solutions for tackling housing issues, which need to be included in the development of the housing strategy.

Meeting with OSBBs representatives and management companies

There are a few types of housing stock in Poltava: the old stock from the Soviet era, which is maintained and managed by municipal enterprise ZhEO No.2, and the new housing stock, which is mainly managed either by OSBBs or housing management companies. ZhEO No.2 is managing approximately 1,800 buildings, of which only 25 were constructed less than 20 years ago. This municipal enterprise manages both multi-storey apartment buildings, of which 870 are over five storeys high and have central heating, and single-storey two- to three-unit buildings located on private land plots. As already mentioned, this municipal enterprise still operates under an outdated model, and the city has set a very low tariff for housing management and maintenance, which is paid by residents. As a result, the enterprise fails to provide sufficient quality of services and requires constant subsidies from the city.



Photo 10.
Oleksandr Landat, Head of the municipal enterprise ZhEO No.2, and Deputy Head Olena Kochetkova

Until 2022, the Poltava city budget had been covering annual major repairs in some buildings, replacing pipes and windows, and fixing roofs. However, in recent years, due to martial law, the programmes for renovation, insulation, or reconstruction were halted. The enterprise is trying to communicate this information to apartment owners and urges them to become more actively involved in the maintenance of their buildings. However, it is difficult to achieve without political and legal mechanisms.

OSBBs received support until 2024, but since 2025, major building repairs will no longer be covered with municipal council budget funds, unless those buildings have been damaged due to military actions.

The housing management model, suggested by the state, which involves the creation of OSBBs, is gradually developing in cities, but is not gaining sufficient popularity due to a lack of initiative and motivation among the population and a low level of encouragement of these processes by central and local authorities, who do not have resources for this. The number of OSBBs in Poltava comprises only 16% of the entire housing stock. At the same time, a significant number of OSBBs exist only on paper and do not have active and effective management bodies. As a result, the process of deterioration of the housing stock continues, and the need for its repair and renovation becomes stronger every year.

The meeting was joined by the most active and experienced heads of OSBBs, building managers and local experts representing a well-developed city community that has shaped around the housing management reform. They have been successfully implementing the state housing management reform in their buildings for many years, so they are not only familiar with the challenges and difficulties in practice, but also have an action plan.

Representatives of the OSBB community say that most buildings where OSBBs have been established are in much better condition, because each OSBB have a management body (general meeting of owners, head of OSBB) and their agency is developing. All problematic issues in the building are



Photo 11.
Oleh Zvolynsky, Chairman of the Council of Heads of OSBBs of Poltava, Chairman of the Board of OSBB Nash Dim-21, one of the buildings that underwent complete energy-efficient modernisation in Poltava, and other heads of OSBBs of the city. Liudmyla Bolotina, Vice-Chairman of the Council. Andrii Khyl, a member of the Council.

being noted and gradually resolved by the management body, which deals with them systematically and is interested in keeping its assets. According to the discussion participants, a management company without OSBB cannot fully replace this function.

Considering the abovementioned, the key needs for building the resilience of housing stock management include:

- the need to transfer land plots under buildings for free use by OSBBs or management companies;
- the need to reorganise municipal enterprises and complete the housing management reform – hold competitions for posts of building managers;
- political support for public initiatives to implement housing management reforms.

Community representatives call for prioritising effective management decisions and are ready to cooperate with the city authorities. They have already gained experience in conducting public communication campaigns to facilitate reform and increase the responsibility of owners, as well as communicating necessary changes to city residents. This experience should be used to develop and implement a strategy to strengthen the city's housing sector.

Thus, with IWO moderating, a productive dialogue was established between representatives of this community and representatives of the city and the municipal enterprise. It is clear that all parties are interested in cooperation, interaction, and unity in solving the problems related to the housing stock maintenance, taking into consideration the new demands of the time and standards to ensure the resilience and smooth functioning of the city's housing stock. The participants agreed that the elevator systems are extremely worn out and in dire need of significant investment, regardless of the building management type. It is also necessary to actively work with the population to improve payment discipline and establish fair and competitive rates for the effective service provision for building maintenance.

Photo 12.
Oleksandr Rudenok, representative
of the enterprise "Poltavalift". Maryna
Kharchenko, Head of Housing and
Utilities Department of Poltava City
Council



Photo 13.
Oleh Zvolynsky
and Knut Höller

Photo 14.
Modernised
apartment building

Managing Director of IWO e.V. Knut Höller visited the apartment building of Oleh Zvolynsky, Chairman of the Council of Heads of OSBBs of Poltava, Chairman of the Board of OSBB Nash Dim-21. In 2018, Oleh Zvolynsky participated in the IWO e.V. project, which was aimed to encourage energy-efficient modernisation in apartment buildings. Despite the war, the building modernisation was successfully completed, and now it is an example of introducing changes in the city's housing sector. Mr Höller shared his impressions:

"During the stakeholders meeting in Poltava within the framework of SUR project, which is commissioned by GIZ and which we are implementing, I was delighted to meet my colleague Oleh Zvolynsky. Oleh is the Head of the Board of OSBB Nash Dim-21 at 21 Nechuy-Levytsky Street in Poltava. He was one of the participants in the German-Ukrainian Energy-Efficient Buildings project, which we have been implementing since 2015 together with the German Energy Agency (DENA) and Kompetenzzentrum Großsiedlungen e.V. It was commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy and was joined by 20 representatives of apartment buildings in 14 cities in Ukraine. The project ended in 2020. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, followed by a full-scale invasion and the suspension of funding for energy-efficient modernisation, only a few participants managed to implement their projects. Oleh Zvolynsky is a natural-born OSBB leader: spirited, sociable, a certified civil engineer who never gives up. The technical concept for the renovations, developed as part of our project, numerous discussions and seminars to communicate this concept to the homeowners, the EEF proposal and, ultimately, his tireless work led to success. The building which has 90 apartments owners was renovated and became energy-efficient. Energy consumption was reduced by an average of 40 per cent. A total of 8 million hryvnia (around 160,000 euros) was invested: the Energy Efficiency Fund supported the project with a 70 per cent subsidy, and the city of Poltava

helped with the interest payments on the loan. This model of energy-efficient modernisation of apartment buildings in Ukraine should be continued. The renovation of buildings and repair of damage requires considerable effort and many years of work. Therefore, the success of OSBB Nash Dim-21 is an important precedent and example for Poltava.”

Local experts and stakeholders highlight a number of issues with the housing stock, like the deterioration of buildings and utilities, a lack of resources for maintenance and repair, the challenges of martial law, prices increase, low initiative among residents to maintain their real property, etc. The need for housing stock modernisation is becoming increasingly urgent, but it is hampered by a lack of funding from owners' personal funds and a shortage of city budget funds. The community believes that the OSBBs' ability to independently solve the problems of apartment buildings is higher. Creating conditions for the professionalisation and development of housing management companies is one of the city's priority tasks for the near future. When preparing a local housing development strategy, local authorities should focus on a comprehensive approach to strengthening the resilience of the housing sector, improving safety and creating conditions for economically reasonable and transparent relations between owners and local authorities. The creation and management of temporary and social housing stock following the European model requires developing own «effective operator» model. Poltava needs to achieve a highly professional and diversified level of management of the housing stock in apartment buildings. The city has every opportunity to achieve these goals by using national and foreign experience, securing the consolidated decision of local authorities, the support of deputies and heads of municipal enterprises involved in housing maintenance and asset management, local construction companies, and by drawing on the experience of a group of specialists in OSBB management who take a constructive position on cooperation with the authorities. Proposals and ideas for work in this direction will be taken into account by the IWO project experts.

According to the preliminary results of the project experts, Poltava clearly declares its intentions to implement reforms, is open to cooperation, and is eager to gain successful experience and develop its own strategy to act towards sustainable development of the housing sector based on the principles of cohesion to provide the city's population and IDPs with affordable quality housing. This is confirmed by the meetings held with the city experts, representatives of the public and businesses.

The information received will form the basis of an analytical report and will be used in further strategy development. 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 SUR regional office in Poltava and Poltava City Council for organising the meetings. This document reflects the first impressions of the city, which will be refined after further analysis of the data collected by the experts.

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Photo: Anna Potanina, IWO e.V.