



CHARTER ON AGE-FRIENDLY HOUSING LEIPZIG

Leipzig's charter on age-friendly housing defines common standards for age-friendly housing for the first time and brings together municipal, civic and private actors. The standards represent a compromise between the needs of elderly people, the architectural characteristics of existing housing and the financial means of housing companies in Leipzig.

What are the objectives of the charter?

The main objective of the position paper is to enable Leipzig's elderly inhabitants to live a self-determined life in a familiar environment for as long as possible. To this end, the position paper aims to stimulate cooperation between the city of Leipzig and the actors on Leipzig's housing market.

Timeline

The implementation of the action plan, that is part of the position paper, started directly after the position paper was signed.

Background

The number of elderly people in Leipzig is rising - and will continue to rise. One fifth of Leipzig's inhabitants are over 65. One in four is over 80 years of age. As a result, there is a growing need for age-friendly housing and neighbourhoods.

The position paper was developed in cooperation between Leipzig's senior citizens committee and actors of Leipzig's housing market. The initiative came from a proposal of the senior citizens committee for standards in age-friendly apartments/housing. This was followed by discussions in which representatives from the social welfare office, the urban planning agency, the senior citizens council, the commissioner for senior citizens as well as actors of Leipzig's housing market agreed upon a unified and concerted approach to the issue as well as on concrete measures.

The position paper was signed in 2011 by the deputy mayor for youth, social affairs, health and schools, the deputy mayor for urban development and construction, the head of the senior citizens committee and representatives of Leipzig's major housing cooperatives and housing corporations, that together own between 30 - 40% of housing in Leipzig (especially in neighbourhoods with a large share of senior citizens).

Who is responsible for the charter's implementation?

Different actors are responsible for the implementation of the action plan. The housing companies and corporations commit making the housing stock age-friendly. They also set up the housekeeping service, social counselling and provide information on health or safety

issues. The senior citizens council advises elderly people on age-friendly standards. The city administration is responsible for an age-friendly public infrastructure and for the moderation and evaluation of the process.

How does the charter work?

The position paper defines standards and formulates guidelines for age-friendly housing. It also contains an action plan with concrete measures to be implemented by 2015.

Examples include:

- adapting existing apartments to the needs of elderly inhabitants
- following age-friendly standards in all new housing projects
- improving public transportation in neighbourhoods
- increasing counselling and information for elderly people.

What are the results of the charter?

The charter was signed in August 2011. One result is that cooperation between the various partners has markedly improved. The senior citizens committee has become a valued partner for housing companies when it comes to measures to increase age-friendliness in housing and neighbourhoods. Additionally, housing companies have learned that cooperation between landlords within neighbourhoods is crucial. This has led to one of the senior advisory councils being financially supported by eight enterprises.

Yet, more needs to be done to better address the needs of people with disabilities in this field (barrier-free housing), since age and disabilities often occur together.

First successes are:

- some adjustments in the housing stock of relevant housing companies
- standards have been taken on in public relations works and into advice/counselling to several companies
- establishment of two senior offices per city district
- reconsideration of standards in urban concepts, for example the local amenities concept.

Was the charter evaluated and were there any follow-up activities?

The action plan is monitored as a part of the city's housing monitoring and will be evaluated at least every two years.

What lessons did you learn?

The position paper required a 'common compromise', that is, all stakeholders have learned to understand the position of the other stakeholders involved, to accept these and have increasingly converged (in their positions). The senior advisory board, for instance, has learned that some practical adjustments to housing are desirable, but incompatible with the housing stock in Leipzig as well as with low-income households.

How is the charter funded and what resources (financial and human) are dedicated to its delivery?

Employees of various departments of the city administration have worked on the development of the position paper and action plan. Senior citizens volunteer to sit on a

committee. Financial resources of housing cooperatives and corporations committed to financing the implementation of the action plan.

Who is the contact person for the project?

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Website

There is no website but the charter can be downloaded at:

http://www.leipzig.de/de/buerger/stadtentw/step/wohbau/wohnungspolitisches_konzept/index.shtml

If you have an example of a good practice that you would like to include in the database, please send an email to caroline.greene@eurocities.eu.



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