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## **COOP – Integrated Forms of Cooperation in Housing Stock Policy for the housing provision of risk groups**

There are times in which it is difficult for individuals or families to retain their housing or to attain stable independent housing after housing loss. How successfully this challenge is met in large cities through the cooperation of different institutions, is the topic of an international project.

This EU-project, COOP, running from 2003 to end 2005, focuses on **client-oriented forms of cooperation** between local authorities, housing providers and social care providers – so-called ‘triangles’ – to integrate the homeless into standard housing or to prevent eviction. It aims to show the added value of cooperating as opposed to working separately, with the help of best practice examples.

It has the special **character of a network project**, which means that the main goal is the dissemination of information and established procedures, as well as mutual learning and exchange. It has been implemented as a **Trans-national Exchange Programme** led and funded by the European Commission Directorate - General Employment and Social Welfare, as a part of social protection and social integration, all within the so-called “Open Method of Coordination” established in Lisbon in 2000.

The consortium (consisting of 36 institutions) integrates institutions from all three areas (local authorities, housing providers and social care providers) under the coordination of national research institutes. It consists of seven national teams – **Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and the UK**, all of them focusing on one large city within their respective country. **SRZ / Vienna** has the function of **project coordinator**.

The **social housing stock** proves itself as an **indispensable reservoir** of housing in all countries resp. cities, that can be included in the offer for risk groups. Even more so now, as innovative concepts of rehousing the homeless all aim at keeping the stay in transitory housing (emergency housing, shelters, homes, flat sharing, etc.) to a shortest possible duration. The often accompanied and supported return to independent individual living situation is the main target.

Furthermore, the **prevention of eviction** is an important social concern, especially in the stock of social resp. municipal housing, and should be seen as a challenge for housing associations. It is important to carefully evaluate effectiveness and efficiency of measures taken, as well as to be open to innovative approaches.

**Case studies** were conducted in the cities of Rotterdam, Duisburg, Brussels, Vienna and Leeds, and will be completed by further studies in Cracow and Brno.

The first phase of the project was already concluded, along with a final report. This report and more current information are stored in the homepage of SRZ:

**<http://www.srz-gmbh.com/coop>**