

DWELLINGS FOR VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS - POLICY AND PRACTICE IN THE LARGEST CITIES OF POLAND¹

Magdalena Załączna

Department of Investment and Real Estate

University of Lodz

e-mail: magdalena.zaleczna@uni.lodz.pl

Abstract

In Poland municipalities do not fulfil their statutory obligations of providing dwellings for vulnerable households and often limit their activity to merely providing housing for persons to whom the court has granted the right to dwelling in eviction proceedings. However, even for these people there are not enough dwellings. This very difficult situation of Polish municipalities in terms of the provision of direct housing assistance results from history-related problems with the quality of the existing housing stock, a lack of reform of municipal lease rules and insufficient financial resources. The author focused on a comparison of the municipal housing stock management in the largest cities in the context of changes that took place in years 2009-2016. The results of the research proved there were important differences among cities in terms of the activity of applying the available instruments. Despite acting in the same institutional framework, some municipalities were able to improve the housing situation of citizens most in need of assistance, step by step. The survey covered the voivodeship capital cities of Poland. Critical analysis of literature and documents as well as an analysis of statistical data were used.

Key words: *social housing, municipality, management, unmet needs.*

JEL Classification: *D02, K11, R21, R50.*

Citation: *Załączna M., 2019, Dwellings for Vulnerable Households - Policy and Practice in the Largest Cities of Poland, Real Estate Management and Valuation, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 05-16.*

DOI: *10.2478/remav-2019-0021*

1. Introduction

Regulations concerning assistance in satisfying housing needs are in force in many countries as an expression of the universally accepted need to guarantee human dignity by providing appropriate living conditions. At the international level, such regulations have been included in the following acts: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the European Social Charter. The practical dimension of the declaration on the need to ensure decent living conditions is expressed by the housing policy adopted in a given country. It defines the desired direction of development of the housing market by referring to the existing conditions, indicates the rights of citizens and the duties of public entities, as well as rules for providing assistance and the effects that should be achieved after applying selected instruments. The housing policy as a basis of actions undertaken by public authorities is of a political nature, though it is rooted historically and socially. The policy obtains its legal dimension by means of legal acts, the most important of which is the Constitution.

¹ This paper is a result of the project Convergence processes on European housing markets. International and regional approach 2016/21 / B / HS4 / 00750

In Poland, the Basic Law provides for the right to accommodation in Article 75, which requires public authorities to conduct policies conducive to meeting the housing needs of citizens, in particular to combating homelessness, supporting the development of low-income housing as well as the activities of citizens aimed at the acquisition of their own homes. The Constitution also stipulates that protection of tenants' rights shall be specified by statute. The constitutional provisions are the basis for creating a specific legal framework for the housing sphere. This framework was created after a change of the political system but there was no *tabula rasa*. The Parliament had to refer to the rules applicable in the socialist period. In Polish People's Republic, there was no real housing market, there were, however, rules regarding public housing management which concerned not only premises that were public property but also premises owned by private entities in which residents lived on the basis of allocation decisions. The socio-economic transformation, which began in Poland in the late 1980s, encompassed the housing sphere gradually, as it was too sensitive politically. Only a few years after the beginning of the transformation process, new regulations were introduced, including: the Act of July 2, 1994 on Tenancy Rights and Housing Subsidies² as well as the Act of 24 June 1994 on Ownership of Premises³, which constituted a departure from some of the existing restrictions on the lease and ownership of residential and commercial premises. It was an attempt to modernise the rent policy and enable privatisation of public resources on a massive scale⁴. However, the problem of entitlements to municipal flats was not thoroughly reformed, and the half-measures used were not sufficient to improve the housing situation.

In Poland there are 3 groups of households entitled to direct housing assistance provided by the municipality. The first one includes people who meet the general criteria indicated by the municipal council (e.g. low income) for the right to municipal dwellings; the second group encompasses persons who are in a very difficult personal, material situation - vulnerable households as well as evicted people who have been granted a dwelling in the court verdict. In third group are persons who are evicted without the right to a dwelling, who the municipality must provide temporary shelters for.

Households with eviction judgments granting dwellings occupy a special place on waiting lists. According to the provisions of the Act on the Protection of Tenants' Rights, during the eviction proceedings, the court is obliged to examine *ex officio* whether there are any reasons for granting a dwelling. If a person belongs to a privileged category, the court has to make a ruling on this person's entitlement to a dwelling, while the municipality is obliged to provide it. Those privileged are: pregnant women, minors, people with disabilities, bedridden patients, pensioners who meet the criteria for receiving social assistance benefits, and people with the status of an unemployed person fulfilling the terms specified by the municipality council by way of an ordinance. A dwelling will not be granted if these people can live in a different place than the one used so far or if their financial situation allows them to meet housing needs on their own. Municipalities that are unable to comply with the obligation to provide dwellings to the entitled person are liable for financial losses of the owner of the premises in which the person with the eviction judgment resides, hence municipalities pay compensation.

In Poland, by definition, there is no eviction onto the streets; thus if an eviction order without the right to dwelling is issued and executed, a given municipality should indicate a temporary accommodation to which the evicted person can be moved, unless such accommodation is indicated by the creditor, the debtor or a third party. Municipalities are also unable to meet their obligations in this respect.

In Poland, the study of the number of applications for the allocation of municipal dwellings could lead to misleading conclusions, as there are relatively few such applications recorded in municipalities. This, however, is not because of a lack of housing needs but rather because of general awareness that municipalities, in the absence of new housing stock and due to the existence of long waiting lists, are unable to provide effective assistance (ZANIEWSKA 2007). The very difficult situation of Polish municipalities in terms of the provision of direct housing assistance results from history-

² Journal of Laws No. 105, item 509, as amended.

³ Journal of Laws No. 85, item 388, as amended.

⁴ It should be remembered that on the basis of the Act on Land Management and Real Estate Property Expropriation in force since 1985, the possibility of selling dwellings from the public housing stock was introduced in Poland; the rules applicable to housing management, however, were not fully market-based - although the right to a dwelling became transferable, the owner did not have a say in its management.

related problems with the quality of the existing housing stock, a lack of reform of the municipal lease rules and insufficient financial resources.

The research problem presented by the author concerns the activity of the largest Polish cities in meeting the housing needs of vulnerable households. The author asked herself a research question whether the cities fulfil their duties in the sphere of direct housing assistance with a similar intensity. The author focused on a comparison of the municipal housing stock management in the largest cities in the context of changes that took place in years 2009-2016. The results showed that despite acting in the same institutional framework, only some municipalities were actively engaged in the broadly understood management of municipal housing stock and were able to improve the housing situation of citizens most in need of assistance using the available instruments, step by step. The survey covered the voivodeship capital cities of Poland. Critical analysis of literature and documents as well as analysis of statistical data were used. In the Polish language, the part of municipal housing stock designated for households in the most difficult position is referred to as "social dwellings". The author resigned from this name being aware of the much broader meaning of "social dwellings" in the housing literature and used "dwellings for vulnerable households" instead.

2. Literature review

In Western European countries, the history of the development and transformation of social housing stock has been repeatedly analysed, and stages triggered by political and socio-economic changes have been identified (HARLOE 2008; MALPASS 2008; SCANLON et al 2015). Changing the priorities of the welfare state in the form of a shift towards the market approach resulted in reduced availability of social housing stock, and at the same time the demand for such dwellings increased due to socio-economic conditions (BOELHOUWER, PRIEMUS 2014; GLYNN 2009; VAN KEMPEN, MURIE 2009). Directly affected groups include young people just entering the housing market, who, due to the increase in prices, are no longer able to independently meet their housing needs (BILLARI, LIEFBROER 2010; CLAPHAM et al. 2014; FILANDRI, BERTOLINI 2016), the elderly (ABRAMSSON, ANDERSSON 2016; DELFANI, DE DEKEN, DEWILDE 2015), as well as political and economic migrants (BOERI et al. 2015; MORAGA, FERRER-CARBONELL, SAITZ 2015).

In Central and Eastern Europe, the history of the development of social housing stock looks different due to the political weight it held in the socialist period. The scale of housing construction and distribution was decided on by central authorities. Since the 1990s, transformations have been under way resulting in a very strong reduction in the role and size of the social housing stock as well as a shift of responsibility for meeting housing needs onto the shoulders of citizens (CESARSKI 2011; HEGEDUS, TOSICS 1996; TSENKOVA 2008; LUX, SUNEGA 2013).

The current problems with satisfying housing needs, including the decreasing importance of the social housing stock, seem to be common in Europe. Privatisation, on a more or less massive scale, a lack of new social housing dwellings, a lack of financial resources, and, at the same time, an increase in the number of people waiting for housing assistance are visible in all the EU countries. Increasingly, there is talk about a need for social innovation and a search for solutions that can help solve specific problems on a local scale. New instruments should be adapted to local social, economic and cultural conditions (ARAPOGLOU 2016; GARCIA, HADDOCK 2016). An important factor that appeared in recent years and significantly affects the approach of public entities to the implementation of tasks in the form of housing assistance is the definition of social housing produced by the European Commission (Communication from the Commission 2012). This definition narrowed it down to housing for the most needy; only then does social housing belong to services of general economic interest, and public aid, which compensates for losses caused primarily by reduced rent rates, may take the form of a reduced price for land for social housing, tax privileges or special loan guarantees. The definition adopted by the EC was the result of problems that appeared at the interface between the need to preserve competition and public aid (PRIEMUS, GRUIS 2011).

In Poland, municipalities are the public entities which obligations regarding the housing sector have been directly imposed on. They are the lowest-level local government units⁵. The following can be distinguished among the tasks of municipalities: municipalities' own tasks (for which funds must be included in the budget of each municipality) and commissioned tasks (financed by other entities).

⁵ Since January 1, 1999, Poland has been administratively divided into 16 provinces (voivodeships), 380 poviats and 2478 municipalities (302 urban, 621 urban-rural and 1555 rural ones).

Their own tasks include activities in the field of spatial management, real estate management, environmental protection, municipal roads, sewers, water supply, health care, local public transport, education and municipal housing. Widely understood obligations in the sphere of housing are reflected primarily in tasks related to real estate management, municipal housing and spatial development. Municipalities directly influence their own housing stock (for many years there has been a structural division for municipal generally and for the vulnerable households parts) and indirectly local real estate markets through their spatial management policy. As owners, they sell, lease and rent out residential premises and land, hence they influence the supply side. Municipalities also create (or not) planning documents determining the functions of real estate, thus they have an impact on the direction of its development and value.

One of the basic problems of Polish municipalities is the fact that their housing stock does not meet modern standards, mainly due to age of buildings and many years of repair negligence (KORNŁOWICZ, UCHMAN 2011). The problem is also the size of this stock, as it is too big for the financial resources of municipalities – there are very significant costs related to current maintenance as well as management problems, and, at the same time, too small in relation to the reported housing needs (KUCHARSKA-STASIAK 2013; ZAŁĘCZNA 2014).

This paradox results from the fact that the municipality does not have the ability to decide directly who occupies its premises, as, in accordance with the law in force, municipal tenants from the past have not been verified in any way, and they cannot be removed from their dwellings, even if they are well-off. Municipalities have very little control over the tenants' rotation. At the same time, they must provide direct assistance to households in the most difficult economic and social situation. Municipalities are therefore owners of the stock, but with tenants, and they lack vacant dwellings for those in need of housing assistance. The amendment to the Act on the Protection of Tenants' Rights, which will come into force in April 2019, will enable municipalities to verify the income situation of tenants of municipal dwellings (not more often than every 2.5 years); however, these powers will be granted in relation to tenants who have started using the premises after the amendment comes into force.

3. Data and Methods

The author used a critical analysis of literature, which provided the basis for a deep insight into the research problem, and then went on to the desk study stage. The main elements of municipal housing stock management for each city were documented on the basis of both legal documents and statistical data accumulated in Bank of Local Data (CSO). The collected data was then elaborated and analyzed. The author gathered information about the size and structure of the municipal housing stock and the reported housing needs in the Polish voivodeship capital cities in years 2009-2016 in order to assess the level of implementation of obligations to provide dwellings for vulnerable households. The author collected information about housing stock in total, the municipal part, unmet housing needs and also the cities' activity in the field of municipal housing stock management in a broad sense; she analysed the level of rents, the number of dwellings with rent arrears and ways to assist tenants with arrears. She also focused her attention on such indicators as: efforts put into applying for co-financing from the state budget measured with the use of number of valid applications submitted and cooperation with TBS (non-profit units that primarily rent out dwellings but their stock is not designed for the poorest citizens; these are similar to HLM - habitation a loyer modéré, popular in France).

Municipalities should provide public with information about chosen parts of their housing activities, which Central Statistical Office collects and disseminates. They also have an obligation to share public information. Every entity should have a long-term programme for municipal housing management for at least a five-year period. This is a kind of summary of the past and plans for the future, prepared every five years. Only some municipalities prepare annual reports giving details about the management of their housing stock. The author would like to underline that there is a lack of transparency in housing activities conducted by municipalities. Very important information about waiting lists is not disseminated. The given data are often not comparable because they are produced in different periods. The author collected information necessary for her study from all possible sources, even using personal contacts.

4. Empirical results - the study of voivodeship capital cities

4.1. The general institutional framework

Municipalities are obliged to provide dwellings for vulnerable households and temporary accommodation (as a part of municipal stock). Until now, dwellings, which by definition have a low standard and a small area (minimum 5 sq m per person, 10 sq m for a single-person household), have been selected out of the municipal housing stock and designed to vulnerable households. After changes in regulations that will come into force in April 2019, there will be no longer be a separate stock of such dwellings, as it will be replaced by special leases of dwellings remaining in the municipal housing stock.

A dwelling is granted when the applicant meets the conditions imposed by law and defined independently by each municipality (by way of an ordinance of the municipality council). In practice, in the absence of a sufficient number of dwellings, municipalities do not comply with their statutory obligations and often limit their activities only to providing housing for persons to whom the court has granted the right to dwelling in eviction proceedings. However, there are not enough dwellings even for these households.

Potential sources of increasing the municipal housing stock are indicated in the national institutional framework. The possible tools include housing construction, also supported from the state budget, purchase of dwellings on the primary and secondary market, cooperation with TBS, real estate exchange - including land, as well as public-private partnerships and lease of residential premises from other entities. However, the actual scale of construction and acquiring dwellings by municipalities is not large, mainly due to insufficient public resources. There is also a visible lack of interest in cooperation on the part of private entities. Only some individual municipalities are able to efficiently use the available instruments. It should also be remembered that, since the 1990s, the privatization of municipal housing stock has continued unabated. It is often enthusiastically supported by municipalities, which is reflected by discounts amounting to more than 90% of the price when sitting tenants buy dwellings. This allows municipalities to reduce their housing stock, but it should be noted that, as a result, in the long-term perspective, old dwellings - often exhibiting a high degree of technical wear - that should practically be demolished remain in the municipal stock. Problems do not decrease in proportion to the number of dwellings sold.

4.2. The institutional framework for management of the municipal housing stock

Municipalities in Poland are still the owners of a significant part of the housing stock - about 8.5%. Managing this resource and planning its future use is of crucial importance. The process of the privatization of the municipal housing stock caused the creation of housing associations (condominiums) made up of the owners of the premises. Municipalities are only one of the owners (if the majority of apartments are sold in a building - in terms of yardage - the municipality has no decisive vote). In such buildings, the management is in hands of the chosen owners or commercial companies selected by them. When the stock is owned entirely or mostly by the municipality, three organisational and legal forms that are used to manage municipal resources can be indicated: budgetary units⁶ and budgetary entities⁷, as well as commercial law companies 100% owned by municipalities. The establishment of the organizational and legal framework was carried out over the years, and there is no connection between the time of establishing the organizational form and the choice of solutions and outcomes of the managing process.

In Poland each municipality is required to draw up a long-term program for municipal housing management for at least a five-year period. The detailed tasks of each municipality are a reflection of

⁶ A self-government budgetary entity is based on the net budgeting method. The settlement of its activity is done by paying a surplus of current assets into the budget. A characteristic feature of this entity is that its legal character combines the elements of an economic entity and an entity performing public tasks. A budgetary entity has a wider freedom in conducting its current business activity, as it can make changes in the financial plan in case of higher incomes and expenses than originally planned, providing it does not reduce the payments into the budget or increase subsidies.

⁷ A budgetary unit is linked to the budget by the gross budgeting method. This unit covers all its expenses directly from the budget, while all its revenues are paid into the account of the local government unit. This organisational form is taken on by entities in which the existence of deficit is assumed.

the objectives of the program. They include creating conditions to meet the housing needs of low-income households, improving the technical condition of dwellings and buildings constituting the housing stock of a given municipality, carrying out tasks in the area of providing dwellings for vulnerable households and temporary accommodation, and improving the quality of life of tenants living in the housing stock of the city. Municipalities must therefore find funds for the renovation of buildings, raising their standard through investments and modernization, as well as for the removal of substandard and technically degraded housing stock.

The analysis of the adopted detailed institutional solutions indicates differences between the examined cities. Diversity is visible in relation to the period covered by multiannual municipal housing stock management programs, which may seem strange at first glance, considering that the introduction of the obligation to create such programmes concerned all municipalities equally. However, not all of them fulfilled this obligation, which led to time shifts between the programs in each city. In a group of 16 cities, there were 6 programs for the years 2014-2018(19), 4 for the years 2017-2021, 2 for the years 2016-2020, 2 for the years 2018-2022(23) and 1 for the years 2015-2020. One city, i.e., Zielona Gora, did prepare a programme. There are no real negative consequences of this situation for the ruling president if he has political support. In the case of several cities, the programs expire in 2018; only one city – Poznan, has already prepared a new program and has submitted it to social consultations⁸. A committee was set up in one city to deal with the preparation of the program. The others are waiting until the last moment. This is an expression of the problems that cities have with managing their housing stock and planning it. The individual programme requires many analyses, is expensive, and there are probably many other reasons to postpone its preparation.

4.3. The municipal housing stock – some indicators

Cities' activity in the field of municipal housing stock management was examined using such indicators as: efforts put into applying for co-financing from the state budget for dwellings for vulnerable households, temporary accommodation and night shelters measured with the use of valid applications submitted, cooperation with TBS, as well as the number of dwellings with rent arrears and ways to assist tenants with arrears. In addition, the existing rental rates are also presented to show how large the discrepancies between individual cities and their housing policies are.

The surveyed units show a very diversified degree of willingness to reach into budget money to. These funds may be allocated for housing construction, also in cooperation with TBS, renovation, re-adaptation or change of use⁹. Two cities did not show any activity (Wroclaw, Rzeszow) in this respect in the analyzed period, while the remaining cities made an effort to benefit from budget assistance to a varied degree, record-breakers (Lodz, Gdansk) managed to do it a dozen or so times – see Table 1.

The level of rent derived from the use of the municipality housing stock does not allow for recovery of funds allocated for its maintenance and, although municipalities have the right to freely decide on the level of rent rates, the social resistance that arises in the event of the introduction of rent rate increases discourages their implementation. The basic rent rates given in Table 1 are a kind of simplification, as in many cities there is a point system in place, hence the final amount paid by the tenant of a municipal flat varies. Indicators are used to reduce or increase the final amount. The most typical housing situations allow to state that the lowest rates are in Rzeszow, the highest in Poznan, with the difference reaching 300%.

The examined cities experience problems with rent arrears, though to varying degrees. In Wroclaw, Lodz, Warsaw and Szczecin many thousands of tenants do not pay rent on time, and analyzing this aspect in detail, it can be indicated that, in these cities, respectively 47.1%, 40.6%, 36.1% and 94.3% of the municipal housing stock dwellings are in rent arrears. Their recovery is often ineffective or municipalities do not use any recovery tools, as the tenant evicted for not paying rent often ends up on waiting lists for dwellings for vulnerable households, which municipalities do not have. In financial terms, this is a very heavy burden for urban budgets, as the expenses for

⁸ The article was written in May 2018.

⁹ On the basis of the Act of 8 December 2006 on Financial Support for Developing Social Housing, Sheltered Accommodation, Night Shelters, Homeless Shelters, Heating Distribution Centres and Temporary Accommodation, it is possible to apply for a subsidy from the state budget to cover part of the investment costs.

maintaining the housing stock have to be incurred¹⁰. In an attempt to reduce the scale of arrears, cities apply rent arrear forgiveness, spread payments into instalments, and allow tenants to work off their debts (only in two cities are tenants not expected to work off their arrears).

Table 1

Activity of the examined cities in the area of housing stock management

City	Number of dwellings with rent arrears in 2016 in thousands (% of municipal stock)	The applicable rent rates for municipal/dwellings for vulnerable households per 1 sq m PLN	Debt relief program in the form of debt forgiveness, spreading payments into instalments, working off	Number of applications for co-financing from the state budget for dwellings for vulnerable households, temporary accommodation, and night shelters, including re-adaptation and repairs (the number of valid applications)	Cooperation with TBS
Wroclaw	17.2 (47.1)	7.60/1.89	+	0	+
Bydgoszcz	2.5 (23.8)	10.8/1.23	+	6	+
Lublin	4.1 (50)	6.35/2.79	+	3	+
Zielona Gora	1.9 (47.5)	6.36/2.2	Lack of working off debts	1	+
Lodz	17.9 (40.6)	9/1.8	+	16	+
Cracow	7.9 (49.3)	7.87/1.54	+	7	+
Warsaw	29.1 (35.7)	7.39/1.45	+	7	+
Opole	1.9 (51.3)	5.11/1.22	+	8	+
Rzeszow	0.5 (14.2)	4.18/0.7	Lack of working off debts	0	-
Bialystok	1.7 (36.9)	4.8/1.38	+	4	+
Gdansk	5.8 (33.1)	10.2/2	+	19	+
Katowice	3.9 (24)	9.09/1.15	+	2	+
Kielce	2.0 (50)	6.5/1.6	+	4	+
Olsztyn	0.6 (13)	5.92/1.08	+	4	+
Poznan	8.8 (70)	12.9/2.45	+	5	+
Szczecin	16.6 (94.3)	Na/1.31	+	8	+

1 EURO = 4.3 PLN

Source: own research based on ordinance of city presidents, resolutions of city councils produced in the cities in question

4.4. The size of the housing stock

There is still a significant amount of housing units owned by municipalities in Poland. Fig. 1 presents data on the size of the municipal housing stock in the individual voivodeship capital cities per 1000 inhabitants. Despite changes in the size of the municipal housing stock between 2009 and 2016, Lodz, Wroclaw and Katowice still remain as the cities with the highest numbers of municipal premises per 1000 inhabitants. A diversified scale of reduction in the municipal housing stock (mainly due to

¹⁰ The author has not analysed in detail the amounts of arrears, as they are recalculated every few years, since due to the inability to collect the debts, they are cancelled. In 2016, arrears in Wroclaw amounted to 67.1 mln PLN, in Lodz to 10 mln PLN (a year earlier 51 mln PLN), in Warsaw to 53.8 mln PLN, and in Szczecin to 48.3 mln PLN.

privatization) is visible. It can be noticed that the speed of ownership changes depends, to a large extent, on the municipal policy. High, up to 90%, discounts at the price paid by sitting tenants purchasing a flat, stimulate a faster decrease of the city's housing stock. The level of discounts results from the resolution of the city council. It is clearly visible that all cities, those with the largest housing stock as well as with the smallest municipal housing stock (Bialystok, Rzeszow), are getting rid of it, though in some cities the process is much slower (Lublin, Katowice).

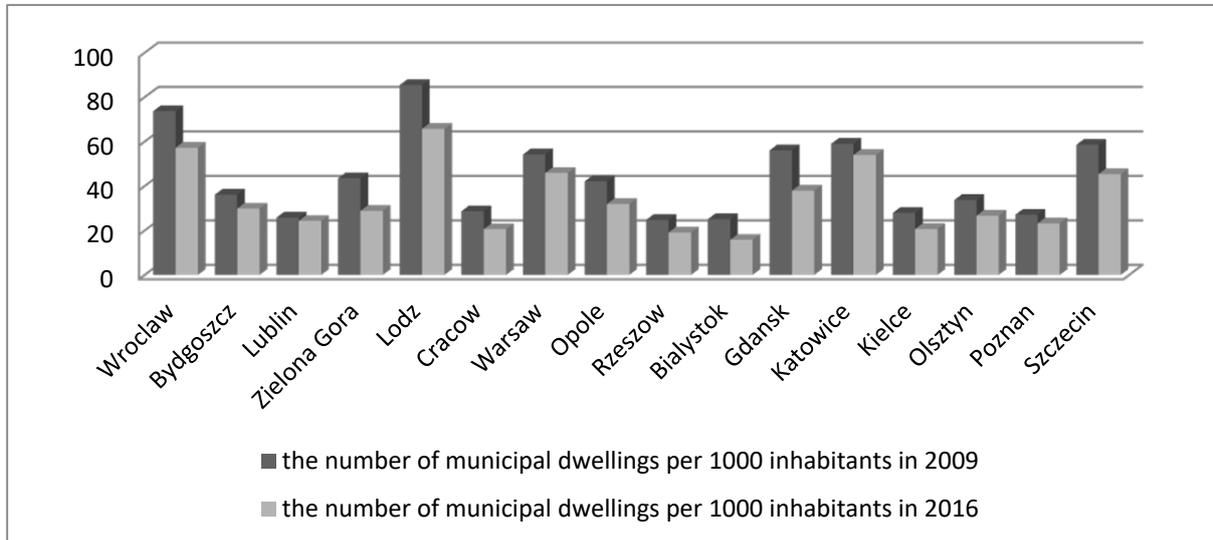


Fig. 1. The municipal housing stock in the voivodship capital cities in Poland in 2009 and 2016. *Source:* own calculation based on Bank of Local Data (Housing and municipal economy - housing stock) CSO.

The number of dwellings for vulnerable households is also an expression of municipal policy, as it is the result of the assumptions adopted in a long-term program for municipal housing management. Fig. 2 presents data on dwellings for vulnerable households per 1000 inhabitants. Apart from one exception (Rzeszow), an increase in the number of such dwellings can be observed everywhere, but the pace of this process varies significantly. Undoubtedly, the leaders in the dynamics of increasing the stock of dwellings for vulnerable households are Lublin and Krakow, while the city with the largest number of such premises per 1000 inhabitants is Szczecin.

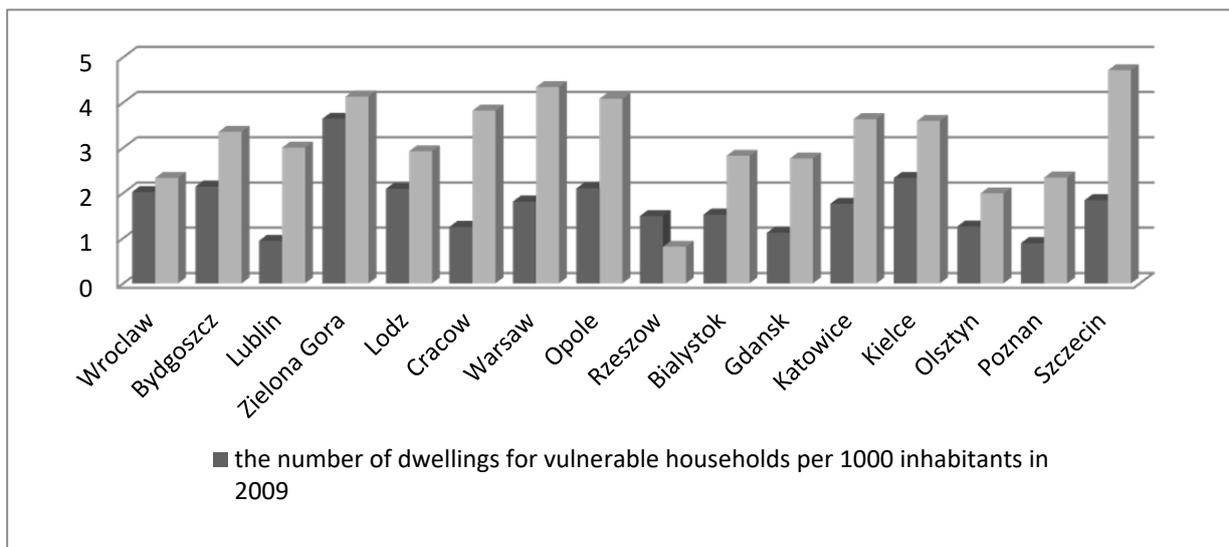


Fig. 2. The number of dwellings for vulnerable households per 1000 inhabitants in the voivodship capital cities in Poland in 2009 and 2016. *Source:* own calculation based on the Bank of Local Data (Housing and municipal economy - housing stock) CSO.

The situation related to the share of dwellings for vulnerable households in the municipal housing stock is slightly different – Fig. 3. If we assume that municipal premises are to be primarily allocated to the most needy, then the share of such dwellings should be high. Krakow, Kielce and Bialystok seek to implement this idea, as the share of these dwellings in the municipal housing stock reaches 17-18%.

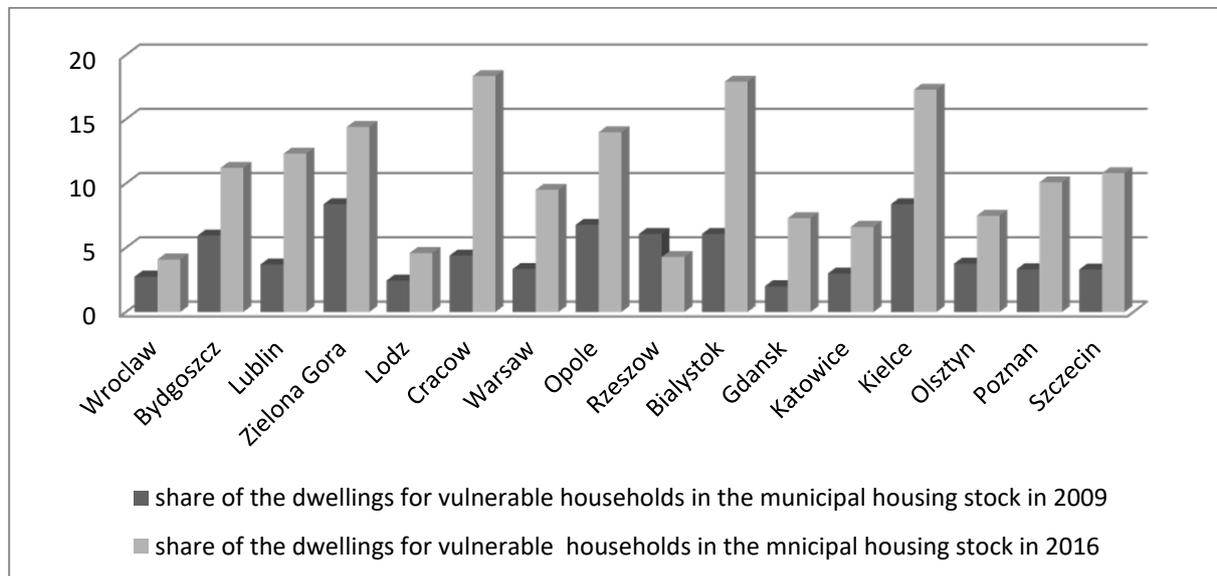


Fig. 3. Share of dwellings for vulnerable households in the municipal housing stock in the voivodship capital cities in Poland in 2009 and 2016. *Source:* own calculation based on Bank of Local Data (Housing and municipal economy - housing stock) CSO.

In order to draw conclusions and assess the changes that took place between 2009 and 2016 in the voivodship capital cities, one more variable is needed – the current state in terms of unmet housing needs. The author has encountered huge difficulties in obtaining information about waiting lists, since cities do not publish such data, as it is not something they can be proud of. Fig. 4 shows the total number of dwellings for vulnerable households and households on waiting lists for the allocation of such premises.

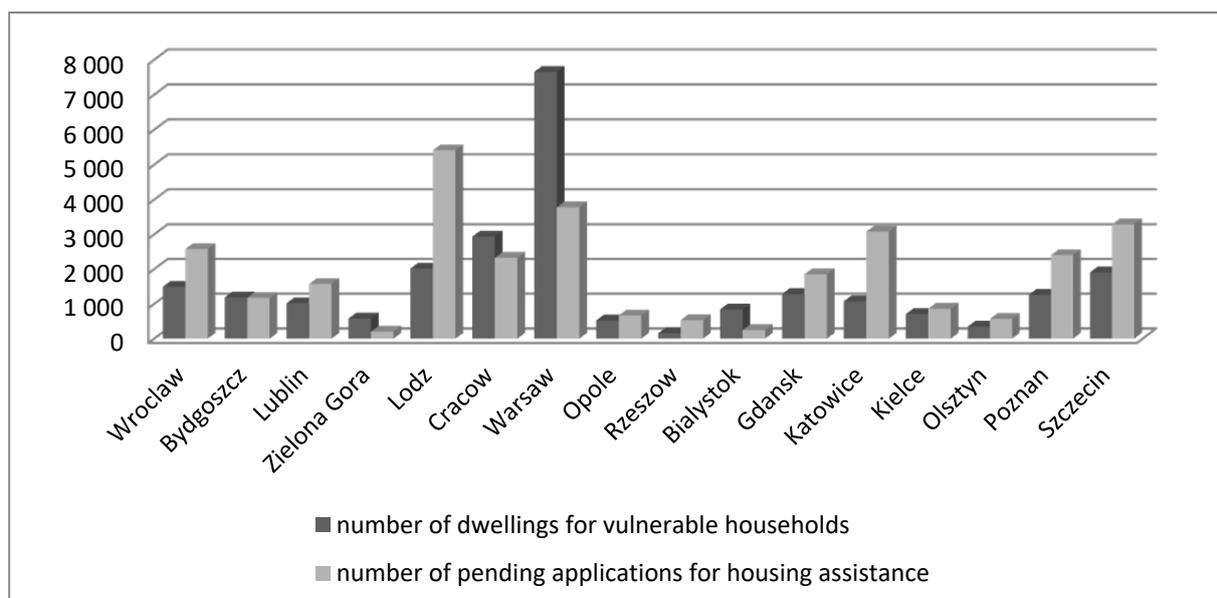


Fig. 4. Number of vulnerable households on waiting lists for dwellings in comparison with the number of such dwellings, 2016. *Source:* own calculation based on data collected in the cities.

The largest number of vulnerable households waiting for dwellings is recorded in Lodz, a city with the largest share of municipal housing dwellings per 1000 inhabitants. The growth rate of dwellings for vulnerable households in the analyzed years was not high and the waiting list of people seeking housing assistance is still growing. The city pays compensation to the owners of premises occupied by households who are waiting for dwellings. A similar picture is visible in Wroclaw. The situation is much better in Krakow, where the stock of dwellings for vulnerable households has been significantly increased and, as a result, the housing assistance waiting list has shortened. Warsaw is the second city in terms of the number of households awaiting housing assistance; however, data show that in recent years the stock of dwellings for vulnerable households has been significantly increased, which has allowed the city to shorten its waiting list.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Social stock is provided by public and private institutions and organisations in individual EU countries. Despite differences in the size of this stock and various rules for its distribution, there are common problems with the level of quality and an insufficient quantity of social dwellings in individual EU countries. Local government units have a special place in most of social housing regimes. They conduct their own housing policies within the existing institutional framework, which results in differences in the size, structure and quality of the local municipal housing stock and in eligibility rules concerning persons entitled to housing assistance.

In Poland, municipalities have clearly described tasks, i.e. primarily the creation of conditions to meet the housing needs of low-income households as well as the provision of dwellings for vulnerable households and temporary accommodation. The catalogue of instruments that can be used for this purpose seems to be wide, but not all of the cities surveyed carry out these tasks to a similar degree.

The research shows that the differences are visible not only in the effects of the housing policy pursued but also in the lack of transparency in municipal housing stock management. Some of the cities surveyed, such as Cracow and Warsaw, publish annual reports that allow one to keep track of ongoing processes; however, this is not common, hence obtaining basic information is a barrier to assessing the effects of local housing policies. Some municipalities still have very serious problems with the inventory of their municipal stock and the verification of persons applying for housing assistance. The approach to the planning of housing tasks is manifested in the preparations for the implementation of new multi-annual programs for municipal housing stock management. Among the five cities which are required to have new documents by 2019, prior to the analysis being carried out (May 2018), only Poznan has already submitted the project for public consultation, Lublin has had a team for the development of the programme since April, and in the three others, nothing has been happening in this respect. Preparation of the program requires collecting a great deal of data and is associated with incurring costs, hence the public procurement procedure needs to be implemented; additionally, the final version must undergo public consultation, and all this takes time.

Despite the widespread difficulties with the implementation of tasks in the field of providing housing assistance which stem from historical and economic problems, it is possible to indicate that, in some cities, the number of households on the waiting lists has decreased, i.e. in Krakow and Warsaw by approx. 1.3 thousand during analyzed period. It seems that activity in the area of acquiring new dwellings and transformations of municipal housing stock are the key to success.

A different situation can be observed in Lodz and Wroclaw. In the first city, the number of households waiting for dwellings has increased in recent years by about 1.4 thousand. The current waiting list means waiting for 3-4 years before being granted a dwelling. In the meantime, the vulnerable household must live somewhere, and if it is a private flat from which the person should be evicted, then the city must pay compensation. Therefore, a lack of dwellings is not only a social problem but also a financial one. To the city's credit, it should be said that Lodz has been making efforts to receive budget funding, but it is not enough compared to the existing housing needs. Importantly, although Lodz is a city with the most municipal housing dwellings per 1000 inhabitants, the increase in the stock of dwellings for vulnerable households is small; this is a visible sign of a problem with blocked municipal housing units as the city does not dispose of its flats. Some attempts made in the past to rent flats from private owners did not produce positive results.

The situation in Wroclaw is also very problematic – the city has many dwellings but the number of these indicated for vulnerable households is very limited, there is no initiative in using public money to increase the stock. The introduced amendment, which will allow municipalities to verify the income

status of tenants, will change the situation only to a small extent, as this audit will only apply to new contracts concluded after the amendment enters into force. There are few such new contracts, as there are no vacant municipal dwellings.

The research shows that, in the same institutional framework, it was possible to gain different outcomes, i.e. in years 2009-2016, some of surveyed cities, due to their activity, improved the housing conditions for the vulnerable household. It should be remembered that there were different socio-economic conditions of the cities and the survey should be developed to clear this field.

It should be added that not all vulnerable households submit applications for housing to the municipality. Some of them look for help in shelters of ngos.

References

- A collection of a long-term programmes for municipal housing management for 16 surveyed cities.
- ABRAMSSON M., ANDERSSON E., 2016, *Changing preferences with ageing—Housing choices and housing plans of older people*, *Housing, Theory and Society*, 33(2), 217-241.
- ARAPOGLOU V., 2016, *Researching housing exclusion and homelessness in Southern Europe: Learning through comparing cities and tracking policies*, *European Journal of Homelessness*, vol. 10(3), 87-108.
- BILLARI F., LIEFBROER L., 2010, *Towards a new pattern of transition to adulthood?* *Advances in Life Course Research*, 15(2-3), 59-75.
- BOELHOUWER P., PRIEMUS H., 2014, *Demise of the Dutch social housing tradition: impact of budget cuts and political changes*, *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 29(2), 221-235.
- BOERI T., DE PHILIPPIS M., PATACCHINI E., PELLIZZARI M., 2015, *Immigration, housing discrimination and employment*, *The Economic Journal*, 125(586), F82-F114.
- CESARSKI M., 2011, *Budżet a mieszkalnictwo i budownictwo społeczne w Polsce. Transformacja i perspektywy* [Budget and housing and social housing in Poland. Transformation and perspectives], *Problemy polityki społecznej*, (15), 29-51.
- CLAPHAM D., MACKIE P., ORFORD S., THOMAS I., BUCKLEY K., 2014, *The housing pathways of young people in the UK*, *Environment and Planning A*, 46(8), 2016-2031.
- Communication from the Commission on the application of the European Union State aid rules to compensation granted for the provision of services of general economic interest *Official Journal C8*, 11.01.2012, p. 4-14.
- DELFINI, N., DE DEKEN, J., & DEWILDE, C. (2015). Poor because of low pensions or expensive housing? The combined impact of pension and housing systems on poverty among the elderly. *International Journal of Housing Policy*, 15(3), 260-284.
- FILANDRI M., BERTOLINI S., 2016, *Young people and home ownership in Europe*, *International Journal of Housing Policy*, 16(2), 144-164.
- GARCIA M., HADDOCK S. V., 2016, *Special issue: housing and community needs and social innovation responses in times of crisis*, *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 31(3), 393-407.
- GLYNN S. (ED.), 2009, *Where the other half lives: Lower income housing in a neoliberal world*, London: Pluto Press.
- HARLOE M., 2008, *The people's home?: social rented housing in Europe and America*, John Wiley & Sons.
- HEGEDUS J., TOSICS I., 1996, *Disintegration of East-European housing model*, Clapham D, Hegedüs J, Kintrea K. Tosics, 1, 15-40.
- KORNIŁOWICZ J., UCHMAN B., 2011, *Aspekty społeczne, ekonomiczne, techniczne komunalnych zasobów mieszkaniowych* [Social, economic and technical aspects of municipal housing stock], *Problemy Rozwoju Miast*, (1-2), 19-28.
- KUCHARSKA-STASIAK E., 2013, *Ocena kierunków i skali przekształceń własnościowych w zasobie komunalnym* [Evaluation of the directions and scale of ownership transformations in the municipal stock], In NOWAKOWSKA A.,(ED.), *Zrozumieć terytorium. Idea i praktyka*[Understanding territory. Idea and practice], Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź.
- LUX M., SUNEGA P., 2013, *19 New Social Housing Strategies in Post-Socialist States*, Social housing in transition countries, In J. Hegedüs, M. Lux, & N. Teller (ED.), *Social housing in transition countries*. New York: Routledge, 307-331.
- MALPASS P., 2008, *Histories of social housing: a comparative approach*, In: SCANLON, K., WHITEHEAD, C. M. (EDS.), *Social Housing in Europe II. A Review of Policies and Outcomes*, London: LSE.

- MORAGA J. F. H., FERRER-CARBONELL A., SAITZ A., 2015, *Immigrant locations and native residential preferences in Spain: New ghettos*. IAE, CSIC.
- PRIEMUS H., GRUIS V., 2011, *Social housing and illegal state aid: The agreement between European commission and Dutch government*, *International Journal of Housing Policy*, 11(1), 89-104.
- SCANLON K., FERNÁNDEZ ARRIGOITIA M., WHITEHEAD C. M., 2015, *Social housing in Europe*, *European Policy Analysis*, (17), 1-12.
- TSENKOVA S., 2008, *Housing policy reforms in post-socialist Europe: lost in transition*, Springer Science & Business Media.
- VAN KEMPEN R., MURIE A., 2009, *The new divided city: Changing patterns in European cities*, *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie*, 100(4), 377-398.
- ZAŁĘCZNA M., 2014, *Mieszkania społeczne jako część zrównoważonego systemu zaspokajania potrzeb mieszkaniowych* [Social housing as part of a balanced system of satisfying housing needs], In SZCZEPANIAK K., WOJEWNIK-FILIPKOWSKA A. (EDS.) *Inwestycje i nieruchomości w warunkach zrównoważonego rozwoju, Wybrane problemy*, 83-95.
- ZANIEWSKA H., 2007, *Bieda mieszkaniowa i wykluczenie. Analiza zjawiska i polityki* [Housing poverty and exclusion. Analysis of the phenomenon and policy], IPiSS, Warszawa.