

## Na Starce

### CSO Platform Interview Questions

#### 1. What was the main consideration or motivation to participate in this CSO initiative?

The first impulse for the condominium of owners was to take the advantage of the very convenient financial tool “Green Savings” to improve the energy efficiency of the buildings. At the same time there was an uncertainty whether the very strict rules of the state grant could be satisfied because buildings were constructed about 20 years ago. The period of uncertainty lasted quite a long time and most of owners started to understand that they should adopt measures to cut energy consumption and consequently costs of heating with regard to fast growing costs of energy in the Czech Republic. Certainly the community realized that this is a way how to increase their property value. Unfortunately, environmental concerns did not play such important role, or at least not explicitly.

#### 2. How was the final group formed? Were there many changes of participants?

The group consists of all the condominium owners of three neighbouring semidetached buildings that account for 23 dwellings. Originally a housing cooperative was the owner of the property, after the privatization process ownership was transferred to private persons associated into a SVJ (Společenství vlastníků jednotek - Association of dwelling owners). Legally this housing cooperative acts as an appointed owner and at the same time is responsible for management of housing estate. The group of flat owners remained unchanged during the process.

#### 3. What was the biggest problem in the formation stage, and how was it resolved?

Leadership from some of the most energy-conscious dwellers was the catalyst to bring the topic to the attention of the association. However, not all the members of the housing association were convinced since the beginning of the need of refurbishing their buildings. Concerns about rising heating costs and the availability of the state grant helped the project to gain support. Disputes in few issues were resolved by democratic voting. Weight of votes is considered according to area of the dwelling units. According to the internal regulations a 75% majority is required to approve renovation projects during the regular association meetings.

#### 4. Did you use the services of a process facilitator? If so, what were your experiences with him/her? If not, would you recommend to use one?

Given the small scale of the project, no external facilitator was hired. Leadership came from within the members of the housing association. The community dealt with the facility management team whom in turn dealt with the contractors. Perhaps in more complex renovation projects including more buildings or a more heterogeneous group it would be necessary to have a facilitator, but not in this case.

**5. Had the group any expertise/experience in (energy efficient) construction?**

Fortunately, there were few community members that were construction specialists and who guided the process and orientated the community in the decision process. The designer of the project dealt with the technical requirements.

**6. What information / tools were you most in need of?**

Mostly the specific requirements and knowledge of the application process for the state grant. Information and negotiation of the building permit process with city authorities was also an important factor. Ultimately the designer and the community leadership coordinated these efforts, so there was no need of further information or communication tools.

**7. How did you find a contractor / architect? If so, what were your experiences with him/her?**

The procurement process was divided into small, manageable stages: building assessment (technical survey), energy audit, design of refurbishment, retrofitting works and site supervision. Traditional contracting was used for each of the stages allowing the community full control over the process at expense of personal time involvement.

Once detailed specifications were available for construction, SMEs were invited to bid their offers. Since the management and community leaders knew some companies, this was done through a short list of trusted providers. The main contract for the retrofitting work was agreed as a one-stop-shop for all the works including thermal insulation of the building façade, partial replacement of windows and other minor repairs needed. Since the scope of the project was well defined since the beginning, a fixed fee contract was signed and successfully executed. The community was satisfied with the execution given that the contract included all the typical provisions regarding the technical specifications of the works, time schedules, warranties, paying schedules and penalties.

**8. Do you cooperate on maintenance / energy supply?**

The operational management of the property has been left to the original owner, the housing association, who has a professional team and service providers at its disposal.

**9. If you could do it all over again, what is the main thing you would do differently?**

Perhaps the project should have been more ambitious in scope. For example some windows were not replaced at request of the flat owners; however they will be in need of replacement in the short term. The repair of internal common areas was excluded from the project and this might have been coupled with the repair of the exteriors, given the discomfort for the residents during the construction process. On a positive note, the project also left a better organized association, now more knowledgeable of how to undertake such projects in the future.