



Profiles & competences for mediators:
group recruitment process (job-description, challenges
and corresponding skills), training programme with
elements of psychological preparation and way of
functioning.

How it all began?

- ❖ Revitalization is a very complex and complicated process, which, contrary to the common stereotype, includes not only property and road renovations, but also working with the community living in a degraded area. The aim of revitalisation is to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants, which can only be achieved through direct cooperation and contact with them. In 2017, in the Revitalisation Office, the Pilot Project “Development of a model for urban revitalisation in a selected area in the City of Lodz, stage 2”, commissioned by the Ministry of Development and co-financed by the European Union from the Operational Programme Technical Assistance 2014-2020, was started. 8 Hosts of the Areas and 8 Social Lighthouse Keepers were employed in the Office in connection with Task I “Orientation for a citizen”.
- ❖ The team was created to support residents who are subject to the process of moving out of properties renovated as part of the Area Revitalization of the Centre of Lodz from areas 1-8. General renovations force temporary relocation of existing residents. Tenants are obliged to move from their current properties to the replacement or social premises proposed by the Lodz City Hall. The moment of changing the place of residence is for many residents of Lodz an opportunity for a new start, a possibility to solve social problems they have faced in their existing premises. At the same time, many residents perceive the relocation process as difficult, complicated and incomprehensible. They often encounter many problems in the course of official procedures and need support in finding their way in the new situation. It should be remembered that the revitalisation process should be conducted in consultation with the local community and other stakeholders. It should involve all municipal institutions and their employees, who can help the residents in the revitalisation process to cope with their problems and concerns and sometimes even fear.
- ❖ The social analysis and recommendations have shown that it is necessary to keep the inhabitants informed about the planned revitalisation activities in a given area and to support them in changing their place of residence when problems arise.
- ❖ In order to increase the sense of security of residents, alleviate the inconvenience of moving house and provide access to knowledge about revitalisation activities, a team of people was hired to support residents in moving house. The team included mediators and their coordinator - a specialist in the field of housing. The whole team works in 8 areas of revitalization.

Host of the area

Host of Area is responsible for the coordination of the removal, the information, the diagnosis of problems associated with the change of residence and the assistance in solving them. It is him who checks the difficulties faced by the residents, indicates where they can go for economic assistance. The housing situation can sometimes be quite complicated. It happens that many years ago a parent, who is already dead, was granted a communal flat, and an adult child has never regulated his or her legal situation. Today, the whole family with children can live in it. They are often in debt and the inhabitants do not know the amount of the debt or do not understand why it is so high. The role of the Host of the Area is to help in contacting the Office and settling the situation before moving. HA helps you get a housing benefit, offers to participate in a debt relief scheme or pays in installments. When the debt is accompanied by more complicated life problems of the inhabitants, the Social Lighthouse Keeper is included in the work.

The Social Lighthouse Keeper

The Social Lighthouse Keeper supports the residents in the process of life change, which may be motivated by moving. He works with people who are, or will soon be, being carried out in connection with the ongoing revitalization, but are unable to solve their problems on their own, but are ready to accept help and make an effort to make a life change. SLK can benefit from support regardless of their economic status - the income criteria typical for social welfare are not applied here. SLK helps to make a decision, dispel doubts and look for answers to difficult questions. It accompanies the resident during visits to the employment office and reviews employment offers with them, helps to settle matters in the social welfare centre, e.g. in order to obtain care services. In order to be able to reliably perform his work, he deals with a small number of charges (families or lonely people) at the same time - in practice, there are several environments.

Team

- ❖ Host of the Area and Social Lighthouse Keeper form the core of the support team. Thanks to their cooperation it is easier to find inhabitants in need of help and build a support system for them. A housing specialist is responsible for coordinating the work of the teams. He or she is also responsible for the cooperation with the municipal support institutions. Regular meetings and consultations on difficult issues help to ensure effective

teamwork and the exchange of information. This ensures that many issues are dealt with on an ongoing basis. The teamwork of mediators is of great importance. Due to the unique character of the model and the lack of models in Poland, the details of the system's operation are worked out on an ongoing basis. What matters is the local specificity, the scale of the problems and the time spent on solving them.

- ❖ In Lodz, mediators work in one team. For several months, two methods of their work were tested. Initially, there were 4 pairs of specialized mediators, while the others were an intervention group, reacting on an ongoing basis in more difficult cases. Such a solution guaranteed the participation of "specialists" in solving a specific problem, e.g. a social lighthouse keeper specializing in working with former prisoners and violent men could deal with specific issues without assigning them to a specific area. After three weeks of testing these two solutions - the permanent duets and the intervention group - it was decided to create permanent teams of mediators, including cooperation and exchange of mediators in difficult cases requiring additional support. The main arguments in favour of such a solution are the dynamics of the removal process and the need for rapid reaction, and this can only be ensured by mediator teams working together. Such a system of work guarantees the support of as many people as possible. This concept also works well at the stage when the moving of many communities has to be organised in a relatively short period of time. The idea of mediators' cooperation is still evolving and it may turn out that the results of monitoring and observation of teamwork will allow to find other solutions to improve the effectiveness. The situation is changing. Residents after moving will need support in their new place of residence, sometimes outside the revitalisation area, and then some will want to return to their old apartment after the renovation.
- ❖ The Lodz team is a part of the unit coordinating the activities of the revitalization of the Revitalization Office in the City Hall of Lodz. In any other city, the intention to place the mediator in the structure of the Office and in the structure of revitalisation activities should be analysed before the introduction of this function. The mediator may act as a part of the unit coordinating revitalisation (as in Lodz), be a member of the unit responsible for moving or managing social projects in the revitalisation process. It is crucial that mediators and the person coordinating their work be placed in the same place in the structure of the institution. This allows for more effective action. The team should develop procedures of cooperation with other organizational units, especially with the social welfare center and the department responsible for housing policy management, as well as with the unit implementing social projects under the revitalisation program.

Job description

THE COMPETENCE MODEL

Host of the Area	Social Light Keepers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coordination of removals, • informing residents about the revitalization process, • solving housing problems, • encouraging and supporting residents in debt collection, • delivery of indications to the resident, explaining the process of moving, • accompanying the resident during the inspection of the indicated apartments, • assistance in arranging media agreements in the new premises, • monitoring the entire removal process, including the premises' opinion, • permanent contact with the resident after the move - support in decision making about coming back. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • psychological care, support of residents in the process of moving, • organisation of support networks around the inhabitants • encouraging and supporting residents in debt collection, • assistance in settling matters related to allowances, ruling • about disability, etc. • assistance in the transfer of documents in educational establishments, • soft" work with the resident, motivating to make changes in life, • e.g. therapy, taking up a job, etc. • permanent contact with the resident after the move - support in decision making about coming back. • tools Individual Support Plan and Ad hoc Content Teams.

The way mediators work is still evolving. The tools, ways and methods of supporting the inhabitants and building competence support in the team itself are being tested. The work of mediators is monitored on an ongoing basis. Changes are being introduced to make the support of residents in the process of revitalization more effective.

The detailed job description and professional profile of the employees may vary from city to city depending on the needs of the inhabitants. In Lodz, the positions of mediators are strongly connected with moving. Since these are new functions, the selection of people for these positions was not guided by competence requirements resulting from social welfare regulations or other typical local government tasks. In the process of creating the guide and monitoring individual work tools, the authors pointed to the great importance of aptitude to perform this function. The importance of empathy, communication skills and the ability to motivate the resident to change were emphasized.



Competences

As a result, the choice of competences is the result of meetings with employees and discussions about their tasks and role. Attention should be paid to the necessity of evaluation and development of the level of individual competences through training and supervision.

In Lodz, the work of Mediators is subject to continuous evaluation. Feedback on the effects of work, progress and development of competencies, the way of action, effectiveness, strengthen the quality of their work. It is important both for the whole process and for the employees themselves, because people (despite fears) like to know how they are seen by others, how their work is perceived. It also allows to trace their involvement, its value and importance in the context of the process. From the perspective of the institution, this evaluation allows for evaluation of the effectiveness and quality of work, allows to indicate the development potential of the employee and performs an important motivational function.

Building an effective system of employee evaluation requires the observation of a team of employees during the performance of their duties and determining the target competencies needed by the entire organization. This requires indicating the purpose, principles, subject and procedure of the employee appraisal. In Lodz, these tasks are performed by a housing specialist who coordinates the work of the team of mediators. Its establishment helps to maintain high quality of activity.

Initially, it seems most effective to assess the work of mediators by defining objectives - this method refers to the management by objectives - by setting them jointly by the superior and the employee, so that the employee's development is related to both the organisation's aspirations and its individual needs and plans. Setting a goal entails establishing further tasks and providing support in the work to achieve it.

The assessment takes the form of a coordinator-mediator interview. During the meeting, they discuss the results and ways of achieving them and together - which is worth emphasizing - set development goals. In Lodz, these individual interviews are an important element of the evaluation and evolution of mediators' functions. Selecting the right coordinator is crucial. It must be a person who is focused on working with the team and understands the role of the mediator.

COMPETENCE	DEFINITION	DETERMINANTS
Communication	The ability to communicate effectively with others, including people with different views, education, social status.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - speaks in a clear and understandable way - can listen to and understand the intentions of the interlocutor - asks if there is no information and checks if it is understood (e.g. paraphrase) - is able to adjust the level of specialist vocabulary to the interlocutor's needs
Empathy	The ability to feel and understand each other's experiences and to communicate about them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is sincere in its relations with the environment - first he listens and collects information, then he comments - doesn't judge, talks about his feelings. - feels in the situation of others, has a reflection of what I can do in such a situation.
Control	The ability to control one's own behaviour, to be aware of one's emotions and to react to them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - does not give in to emotions - is aware of its reactions to emerging difficulties and the emotions associated with them - focuses on the task, purpose, solution of the problem - keeps his distance to the problem.
Stress Resistance	Stress does not cause a decrease in the effectiveness of performing professional tasks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - copes with emotional stress to the extent that it allows the performance of tasks, pursuit of goals and goals. - can talk using factual arguments in spite



		<p>of attacks...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can relieve difficult emotions during a conversation
Emotional intelligence	<p>Personal competence in the understanding of the ability to recognize emotional states of one's own and others', as well as the ability to express one's own emotions and deal with emotional and moral states of others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recognizes and manages his/her emotions - recognizes the emotions of others - is able to use emotions in action, both his/her own and the people he/she works with
Openness to others.	<p>Ready for diversity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is a person open to diversity - is a person ready to talk - accepts dissenting views - is a flexible person vis-à-vis others - does not impose his own idea of how to solve the situation
Perseverance	<p>The ability to continue the efforts despite the difficulties.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is patient - consistently pursues the objective of - doesn't give up despite his failures.
Adapts to a changing environment	<p>The ability to break stereotypes and thinking patterns aimed at solving the problem.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - breaks the schematics of thinking... - is able to look at the problem from different perspectives - can use a variety of resources
Independence	<p>Complete tasks without direct supervision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is able to plan his/her tasks for a day/week - is able to perform planned tasks in a specific time - seeks solutions to problems encountered and support in solving them - is consistent and disciplined



Assertive	Expression of own views, opinions, emotions with respect to other people's views, opinions, emotions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can defend his/her position with arguments - accepts criticism from others with composure, expresses his opinion on this subject - knows the limits of his/her competences and is able to defend them without offending feelings of others
Time management	Effective use of working time. is able to plan tasks and set priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is able to plan time frames for specific tasks - it shall provide for the necessary resources to carry out the task
Learning to learn	Fast acquisition of knowledge and skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has the ability to analyse and synthesize knowledge - is able to assess the importance of and the usefulness of the specific information - can draw conclusions - is able to translate knowledge into practical situations in his/her work.
Organizing and planning	Anticipate all factors that may affect the implementation of the task; create optimal conditions for the implementation of the tasks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifies the necessary resources (time, resources, people) both for oneself and for others. - set objectives, priorities and monitor activities, both its own and those of others - is consistent in its action
Problem solving	The ability to effectively manage the problem solving process based on all the necessary information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sees the problem at an early stage - is not guided by emotion - is able to search for solutions in cooperation with others
Organisational	The ability to use one's own knowledge and that of co-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can use both information channels and the knowledge of the whole institution (e.g.



efficiency	workers - knows the competences of co-workers and institutions	the office). - has knowledge of the organization's mechanisms, knows its strengths and weaknesses
Partnership	Treating co-workers and residents as partners (with respect).	- treats others as equal - takes into account the opinions of others, draws on experience and draws attention to real limitations - applies the win-win principle in solving problems
Negotiating	Looking for ways for all parties to strive for the most beneficial solution to the conflict.	- is able to identify the position and interest of all parties, including his/her own - devotes time to planning and preparing for the process of finding solutions - tries to get to know the other party's arguments well
Decision-making/accountability	The ability to accurately assess the situation, draw conclusions and make decisions on the basis of them; no tendency to avoid responsibility.	- Skillfully analyses situations, even under stress - synthesizes and assesses data accurately, is able to draw conclusions - takes responsibility for its own decisions
Making changes	Ability to work with people in a changing environment	- is open to change - can operate in a changing environment - is able to set goals and manage people in a changing environment
Effective motivation for change	The ability to motivate people to cooperate, make efforts to change their life situation.	- motivating others to cooperate or change - has the ability to persuade - can understand another person's point of view



Regular supervision

Mediators are a group at high risk of professional burnout due to the specificity of direct work with residents, difficult issues they face. Constant contact and common aspiration to solve problems make Mediator naturally deepen the relationship with the environment he helps. Therefore, it is necessary to build an effective supervisory support system to counteract burnout. Supervision is the developmental relationship between the supervisor and the Mediator. Its aim is to provide better support to the residents, who are the final beneficiaries of this process, and to prepare Mediator to face all the challenges he faces in his work. First of all, supervisors help mediators to emotionally separate the problems they face professionally, isolate emotions so that they do not affect contacts with other people and their families. Supervision creates healthy emotional barriers for mediators.

Supervisions can be twofold:

- ❖ Group supervision for the whole group of Mediators

In Lodz, the meetings are scheduled for about 4 hours. They are conducted by a person with supervisory competences, confirmed by experience (min. 3 years of work, conducting supervision for professionals who support other people, e.g. social workers, psycho-logists, therapists, etc.) and/or educational preparation (e.g. graduation from master's or post-graduate studies in this field or training/courses in the scope of min. 200 educational hours). Meetings should be regular (e.g. once a month).

- ❖ Individual supervision

In Lodz, these meetings last 1.5 hours. The same competencies are required as for group supervisors. Sessions should be regular (e.g. once a month) and each Mediator should have at least 6 supervisions per year. The mediator should be able to report at any time that he needs supervision. The individual supervisory relationship may be supported by telephone contact where necessary and in agreement with the supervisor. For this relationship to be cognitive as well, it can be extended to include developmental tasks for the mediator.

Training

A very important element is the preparation of the Mediator to perform his or her function. In Lodz, internal trainings were conducted.

THEMATIC SCOPE OF THE TRAINING/COURSE

The following topics can be implemented in various forms of education: training for mediators or self-study in external training. Not all topics have to be completed before the mediator starts his or her work. It is possible to accumulate knowledge and at the same time to gain one's own experience in current work.

Legal documents	❖ Diagnosis of the beneficiary's situation or how to conduct diagnostic activities
Competences of individual aid institutions	❖ Effective motivation for change, or how to motivate for change, how to build internal motivation for change, how to involve people in change and self-development
Basics of the social welfare system	❖ Building an individual plan in practice
Local community organization, including new tools of work in the local environment	❖ Effective communication with elements of emotional intelligence - raising awareness of emotions and attitudes towards socially disadvantaged people, personal resources and limitations in the context of working with a resident in a difficult life situation.
Housing policy	❖ Crisis intervention or how to deal with a crisis situation, how to get out of a crisis
Working with a vulnerable client; how to work with people with specific social problems, in particular addictions, disabilities, violence	❖ First aid before medical treatment, how to intervene in selected situations of threat to health and life
How to work in ad hoc teams; how to use partnership in the local community as a tool to solve social problems	❖ Non-typical problems encountered at work and ways to solve them (based on mediators' experience).



- **Psychological workshops**

The workshop was conducted by psychologists working in the Office. It included psychological and sociological preparation for work, sometimes difficult contacts with residents, dealing with claims and social problems. Workshop exercises including simulation games, elements of interpersonal training, assertiveness training, as well as brainstorming, during which problems that employees may encounter were discussed, were a very important element of the adaptation programme. The team shared its feelings, fears connected with a big challenge, and also strengthened each other, motivating to act.

- **Teamwork**

Due to the nature of the mediators' work, it was necessary to build a harmoniously functioning team. During these activities, the group participated in various exercises, both integrative and aimed at distinguishing the roles of the team members. The result of the work was a set of principles and rules of functioning in the team, including moral and organizational issues. Each employee participated in the creation of the "code", then it was signed by everyone and hung in a visible place. It is an important element in the social adaptation of employees, and at the same time it was an introduction to an open discussion about the working atmosphere in a team.ⁱ

ⁱ The material was prepared on the basis of the Handbook for Social Lighthouse Keepers and the Handbook for Hosts of the Areasⁱ