



Empty Spaces and opportunities to convert them into affordable homes for disadvantaged groups



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Executive Summary

Are there resources in Polish towns and cities that could be adapted for housing purposes? Can we identify buildings already existing within neighbourhoods that could be brought back to life, yet remain vacant and unused?

We must begin by defining Empty Spaces before we can begin to collect data on this subject and further investigate the possibility of creating habitation of a different kind; namely the provision of affordable accommodations for those most in need of a roof over their heads.

Often, the owners of the larger real estate resources in Poland are local governments. These local authorities regularly report data on vacant property in their housing stock to the Central Statistical Office. However, much of the unoccupied real estate in Poland, despite ongoing privatisation, falls under the jurisdiction of the State Treasury and private or religious organisations. Could the owners of these spaces be interested in the development of said vacant properties for the provision of affordable housing to those who need it most?

Following the example set by the British study and in accordance with the research and guidelines set forth by Habitat for Humanity Poland, the definition of "Empty Spaces" has been established as a building that has remained unused for longer than 12 months.

The primary goal of this study was to extrapolate the number of potential empty spaces in Poland which, despite not having a residential function so far, may be well suited to adaptation or redevelopment. The experience of this study has shown that identification of non-residential spaces poses a significant challenge to a Polish market. Residential properties are much easier to identify due to detailed cataloguing and inventory practices.

This study has collected and compiled available public data from the Central Statistical Office, municipal documents concerning revitalisation projects, analysis of a questionnaire survey carried out by key individuals and organisations in the real estate sector and case studies concerning three cities of different size and population density.

Analysis of the sourced and curated information concerning specific buildings and properties in Poland has made it possible to accurately illustrate the potential scale and complexities surrounding the feasibility of renovating or redeveloping unused spaces, the methods of restoring vacant properties to meet key needs, both residential and for purposes other than housing.

This study has also identified important local community projects and non-governmental organizations already in the process of restoring or renovating empty spaces for use. Collaboration between public and private institutions is very valuable in the scope of this study.

The primary source of data concerning empty spaces was to be collected from a questionnaire/survey which would allow respondents to report on current vacant properties in Poland.

Data collected by the research team has been supplemented by various maps cataloguing the spaces identified within the questionnaires sent out to almost 13,000 unique recipients. Of this number, the study received two hundred and twenty-five (225) completed questionnaires, ninety-one (91) vacant property lists were submitted and five hundred and thirty-four (534) responses detailing a lack of vacant spaces based on the criteria set forth in the definition above. (Responses were mainly via email, however conversations over the phone also took place). In addition to this survey, interviews were conducted, and additional documents obtained for three cities: Warsaw, Kielce and Zawiercie, which would become the key subjects of research into seventy (70) revitalisation projects already underway. The studies would examine the quality of existing infrastructure, and the potential of restoring empty buildings with the goal of changing their original function to something better suited to meet the needs of the local community.

As a result of the study, the following results were obtained:

1. The study identified very different empty spaces – some in various states of disrepair, some industrial, some earmarked for future renovation and some pending demolition ahead of real estate development. The following have been identified:

A. From the 225 completed surveys we have identified 154 buildings of various types and 67 properties (here you will note the disproportionate number of non-residential buildings over vacant yet inherently residential properties),

B. From the 91 vacant property lists supplied we have identified 817 buildings of various types and 6,201 residential and commercial properties,

C. From the three city case studies we have identified 16 buildings considered for demolition ahead of real estate development and 4,871 empty spaces in residential properties throughout Warsaw, Kielce and Zawiercie.

2. Of the 225 empty spaces reported in the survey, around 108 have been reported to be suitable for housing purposes:

A. In the case of vacant properties, most empty buildings can be used for housing purposes. It should be noted that 58 of the indicated 108 buildings identified as suitable for housing purposes already have a pre-existing residential function,

B. Of the 225 empty spaces reported, 68 cases were identified as unsuitable for housing purposes and that, despite the existing possibility of renovation, these properties are in such poor condition and thus do not meet the standards required for further transformation.

3. In the course of analysing existing revitalization programs, it was discovered that vacant residential properties are rarely considered for renovation. Usually, only vacant non-residential properties considered to have a negative impact on the surrounding community are selected for renovation. Further analysis of community revitalization projects and conversations with local residents have identified that empty and neglected properties are on the rise and more often perceived negatively by the community as an unsafe and neglected space which can damage the cultural heritage of the town or city.

4. The emergence of a so-called renovation gap was identified: buildings in poor conditions and various states of disrepair along with the need for long term renovation procedures and significant associated financial costs.

5. Among the identified reasons for the appearance of empty spaces, it is worth mentioning the issues concerning ownership, where claims or ongoing owner identification processes are underway.

6. Information on empty spaces can be difficult to obtain. Even in municipalities that should have data on their real estate resources, it is difficult to find and prepare the necessary documents.

7. Where a buildings condition has deteriorated so drastically, demolition can be a way to better organise the given plot for future development.

8. In municipalities where empty spaces are inventoried and policies are in place (preferential leases in the case of commercial properties and renovation policies together with the designation of spaces for renovation that can be subsequently used as rental properties), the number of empty spaces can be systematically lowered.

9. Converting empty spaces into flats is one of the possibilities for increasing the stock of available rental properties. It can be a serious challenge restoring former residential real estate to its intended function when you consider the current standards and expectations of potential residents.

From the information obtained during the course of this study, it can be deduced that local authorities are in fact aware of the issues surrounding empty spaces and recognise the need to work within the framework of existing housing resources. These resources can take the form of industrial spaces, former hospitals, schools and other such public buildings. The biggest challenge facing local authorities are the poor conditions of these empty spaces and the costs associated with their renovation. With the expectation of certain standards for potential residents, the need for updating or replacing heat sources to ensure the space is energy efficient is of much importance, along with the provision of water, sewage and adequate ventilation systems to ensure that the property is compliant with laws governing its rentability.

Currently in Poland, there is no social housing so to speak, however there are social rental contracts for standard residential properties. This means that many properties are used by local authorities as temporary housing. Many of these properties, which once housed multiple families, are now vacant and empty and not suitable for habitation. Under preferential lease programs, local authorities allow tenants to renovate their properties, but the scope of these activities must be limited to a singular space. The issue here is that often, the entire building needs reconstruction; in fact, many of the properties are in such poor conditions that the decision is made to demolish the site in the interests of public safety. Once cleared, the plot can be used in the development of new and versatile real estate and reclaiming the land from further decay. In this way, they plan to build new buildings that perform a variety of functions.

In addition to the existing residential housing stock that requires reconstruction or renovation, many other non-residential spaces were identified: owned commercial properties located on the ground floors of buildings within cities that serve as part of the city's own revitalisation efforts, promoting the social and economic revival of said community. The challenge lies when non-residential buildings like former schools, old hospitals or industrial properties are connected to residential apartments as non-residential real estate gets the most attention when it comes to revitalisation projects and such versatile spaces are often overlooked. Strategies have been developed to address the transformation of empty spaces by social organisations working in conjunction with local residents though there is still scope for much improvement in this area. More often than not, empty spaces play a role in the creation of local activity or community centres which provide various and specialised social services. Here, local initiatives involving residents and the community are necessary yet often lack specialised knowledge about renovation, construction and financing. However, local knowledge of the community from the residents will be an invaluable tool to the organisations working on the revitalisation of the area.

Real estate asset management is also a huge challenge. Management is not standardised in any way for most of the surveyed properties. Often, reported shortages of empty spaces are the result of a very small portfolio of properties. Local authorities are obliged to apply complex procedures in the case of real estate, which can cause difficulties in communication with organisations like PKP for example, the owner of many buildings and land in urban areas of Poland. In connection with the successive registers of real estate and their inhabitants being introduced in communes (for the purposes of waste management, records of "stoves", farms using water pipelines and communal sewage systems), new possibilities of identifying uninhabited real estate are emerging due to pressure from residents to better develop the space, real estate and buildings for historical or cultural reasons. However, there is currently no systematically collected information on empty spaces; it is currently not included, for legal and organisational reasons, in the plans for managing existing housing resources of local authorities. Concerning active revitalisation projects happening across Poland, there is increased input from residents regarding the need for greater care and better management of real estate, not only communal, but also owned by the State Treasury and other private entities.

Projects involving the restoration of real estate for the provision of housing needs for the poor, as well as the creation of protected and assisted housing already exist, though on a smaller scale. It is worth publicising the success of such projects and taking steps to increase the use of empty spaces for housing purposes. Larger cities struggle with the need to carry out major renovations on the existing housing stock, but this wave of revitalisation projects prompts smaller local authorities to carefully review their own properties and assign new functions to them. The greatest opportunities for creating affordable apartments come from disused school buildings, small office and public/municipal utility spaces. However, it is necessary to obtain stable financing of such projects by communities, local authorities and other private institutions because the costs are significant. The attitude of local communities is favourable to these kinds of projects. Moreover, it is worth looking at the possibilities of including other partners, including business in such revitalisation programs.

1. Introduction

This study into the number of empty spaces in Poland and the exploration of their conversion into affordable homes for low-income groups was commissioned by Institute of Urban and Regional Development on behalf of Habitat for Humanity Poland as part of the project "Filling the gap: Repurposing empty spaces to prevent homelessness in Mainland Europe". The study was conducted between May-June 2021. The research examines the problem of homelessness which is a serious challenge in European countries. It becomes more severe when examining the rising homelessness figures and the number of abandoned properties growing at the same time. It asks a question relating to the possibility of using these vacant properties to meet the housing needs for people experiencing homelessness and housing exclusion. This research (see more below) was a preliminary verification of the potential of such a solution.

Foreign Experiences – Context

A lively public debate is taking place in many countries, especially in the UK, the Netherlands and Germany **(1)** and projects are being undertaken to convert non-residential buildings into affordable housing. Similar projects and analytical work have been carried out in the United States **(2)**. Various scientific articles present different approaches to the classification of non-residential spaces in terms of the suitability of their adaptation to housing due to technical criteria (dimensions, foundations and structure, cladding and energy efficiency, utilities like water and sewage, gas, heating and electricity, internal layouts and availability of rooms, acoustic balance, fire safety and escape routes) **(3)**. Criteria such as the building's surroundings and accessibility are no less important when considering transport or investment costs **(4)**.

Methodological approaches to estimating numbers of empty spaces, both among residential and non-residential buildings that can be converted into housing, differ depending on the purpose of the study. In the United States, particularly in Rust Belt cities such as Baltimore, St. Louis and Detroit, which have seen a steadily declining population for decades, buildings are empty and abandoned to such a serious level that some local governments have imposed high fines or taxes if disused buildings have become a security threat. Such solutions are used also in Canada (vacancy tax) **(5)**.

The need to record the threats and tax liabilities of the owners of vacant buildings was identified and prompted employees of many city offices in the USA and Canada to catalogue these empty spaces **(6)**. In addition to records for tax purposes in some cities, separate from official registers, databases from environment institutions **(7)**, non-governmental organisations **(8)** and grant institutions (Revitalisation Fund's Policy Map **(9)**) are also developed.

In Europe, there are initiatives aimed at identifying and estimating the number of abandoned buildings and empty spaces. Databases are created on the initiative of local authorities but are not regularly updated or properly administrated. For example, in Brussels, the inventory includes the results of: (a) field studies combined with inventories; b) collecting information from water and electricity companies **(10)** about buildings with low water and electricity consumption; c) analysis of the population records **(11)**. In some cases, the databases are dedicated to a specific project, such as in Chemnitz, where the Agentur StadtWohnen Chemnitz database (a real estate advisory service from the city of Chemnitz) collects data on apartments that can be rented to institutions and individuals **(12)**.

1https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/sustainable_circular_reuse_of_spaces_and_buildings_handbook.pdf, [25.02.2021].

2 Eppig M., Brachman L., 2014, Redeveloping Commercial Vacant Properties in Legacy Cities. A Guidebook to Linking Property Reuse and Economic Revitalization, Greater Ohio Policy Center.

3 Por. Gann D.M., Barlow J., 1996, Flexibility in building use: the technical feasibility of converting redundant offices into flats, "Construction Management and Economics", 14, s. 55-66.

4 Geraedts R.P., van der Voordt, 2007, A tool to measure opportunities and risks of converting empty offices into dwellings, ENHR International Conference, Rotterdam.

5<https://bylaws.vancouver.ca/11674c.PDF> [26.02.2021].

6 W wielu miastach zostały utworzone specjalne rejestry (np. w Chicago https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/bldgs/provdrs/inspect/svcs/check_status_of_vacantproperty.html [26.02.2021]). Obowiązek rejestracji pustostanów i dodatkowe obciążenia podatkowe ciążą na właścicielach, a brak wypełnienia zgłoszenia jest obwarowany karami finansowymi.

7 Np. National Business Address Data: www.huduser.org/portal/usps/index.html [27.02.2021].

8 Np. Northeast Ohio Community and Neighborhood Data for Organizing (NEOCANDO)

9https://www.mml.org/resources/sample_docs/ordinances/blight/toolkits-and-reports/redeveloping%20commercial%20vacant%20prop-may14.pdf [25.02.2021].

10<https://www.urbanet.info/abandoned-urban-spaces/> [26.02.2021].

11https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/sustainable_circular_reuse_of_spaces_and_buildings_handbook.pdf, s. 23-24 [25.02.2021].

12<https://www.stadtwohnen-chemnitz.de/> [26.02.2021].

Purpose and description of the study

The purpose of this study is to:

A) Estimate the number of empty spaces in Poland that could be transformed into affordable housing, including distributed integration data on empty spaces in public resources and recognition of the scale of empty spaces in the resources of other owners, as well as

B) To assess the potential of reducing the housing deficit in Poland by exploring the potential of transforming identified empty spaces.

Due to the short period in which study was generated and its pertinence to Poland, the aim was to narrow the research field to existing databases (available in official statistics, supported by the content analysis of active revitalisation programs) and a simple questionnaire to assist in cataloguing the number and quality of identified empty spaces for the next stages of research.

The starting point was to define, in agreement with the commissioner of this report, the definition of empty spaces (separately for residential and non-residential) and the suitability of its conversion into affordable housing. Then, a simple questionnaire was developed for both types of space, allowing the identification of such properties. Each part of the survey (for commercial, residential and non-residential premises) made it possible to collect a series of relevant information about the spaces. The primary objective of the questionnaire was for the respondent to provide the address of the property which enables automatic geocoding of responses.

Due to the difficulty of listing a greater number of empty spaces within the survey, individuals or organisations reporting more than five spaces have the option of sending a separate list of these properties. This concession turned out to be extremely valuable from a cognitive point of view, as it allowed for the assessment of the scope of information that local authorities had about vacant real estate in their communities. The inventory requests were intentionally designed not to encourage the production of new inventories, but to send existing information in their possession where possible.

The questionnaire regarding vacant property/ empty spaces was shared with local authorities, the State Treasury, churches and religious organisations and real estate agencies. Additional surveys are undertaken by examining the bankruptcy of commercial properties (fully compliant with all appropriate legislation) and real estate agencies dealing with commercial buildings. A social media campaign has also been launched to promote the reporting of empty spaces by the public and create a community hub of sorts to identify properties that owners may be willing to rent outside of the usual market. The governing body behind this study will verify the legitimacy and legality of such properties.

This survey method allows for a quick geocoded inventory of vacant properties that the commissioner of this report is seeking, based on the concept of empty spaces and their suitability for transformation into affordable housing for the poor and thus reducing the housing deficit in Poland, particularly in the affordable housing sector. The results of this study have identified that there is such usable real estate in the various municipalities within Poland, particularly in large and medium density cities. While information pertaining to such properties is limited and poorly accessible, the poor conditions of many of these properties and the associated costs of removal or demolition make it difficult for decisions to be made about how best to use the space.

Planned outcome of the study

Ultimately, spaces that can be used or adapted to housing needs will be placed in the database that takes the form of a map. Based on the results of the survey, two cities were selected for analysis (Kielce and Zawiercie). The selection of cases was guided by a diverse cross-section of inventoried properties, and the requirement of the commissioner of this report to analyse a voivodeship city (other than Warsaw) and a medium city losing its socio-economic functions. Additionally, the case of Warsaw was analysed. In this case study, qualitative issues were analysed (reasons for unused resources, obstacles to restoring their use, costs of restoration or adaptation for housing purposes).

In parallel with the study conducted in Poland, similar research has been carried out in Great Britain, but access to data on the number of vacant properties is easier to find in public statistics, where unused residential real estate is inventoried and intended for economic use in public, social and private development projects. It is also possible to cross reference this data with the demand for residential housing.

The Central Statistical Offices only marginally document vacant properties in municipalities as indicated by the results of the 2019 Supreme Audit Office study (13).

13 NIK, 2019, Wykonywanie przez gminy zadań z zakresu gospodarki mieszkaniowej, Warszawa, s. 9-10.

2. Test Procedure

Definition of Empty Spaces

Properties and buildings can be described as empty, uninhabited, or vacant - depending on the data source and context. In population and housing censuses, uninhabited properties are identified, commercial buildings are most often empty, while the vacancy of a property is related to the reporting of said space to the Central Statistical Office by local authorities concerning apartments and buildings from the community that are intended for rental purposes but are currently unoccupied. Properties intended for sale are defined in advertisements as empty, properties with no legal title are no longer vacant.

For the purpose of this study, a definition of empty spaces was established in line with that adopted in the report "Repurposing Empty Spaces to Prevent Homelessness in Mainland Europe" to ensure consistency and comparability of study results. It was assumed that empty spaces are identified as properties or building that have not been used or occupied for at least 12 months before the date of this study.

General information about the study

The study was conducted in parallel using two techniques:

- Desk research analysis, including data available in public records and the results of previous research undertaken by the Institute for Urban and Regional Development, later supported by a study on revitalization programs in Polish municipalities,
- Questionnaire in the form of a geocoded survey, which consisted of a few questions about the empty space being catalogued. The survey was primarily aimed at identifying vacant properties that have the potential for adaptation. The survey, however, asked for details on all unused buildings and properties. In the event that there were more than five spaces to be catalogued, we asked for a comprehensive list containing addresses and indicating the type of space: (industrial, commercial, or residential property).

After establishing the empty spaces definition in accordance with the report "Repurposing Empty Spaces to Prevent Homelessness in Mainland Europe" as an unused property or building that has remained vacant for at least 12 months prior to the survey date, the types of non-residential vacancies were identified as:

- Commercial properties (divided into commercial, utility and office spaces),
- Public buildings,
- Community centres,
- Attics,
- Warehouses,
- Workshops,
- Schools.

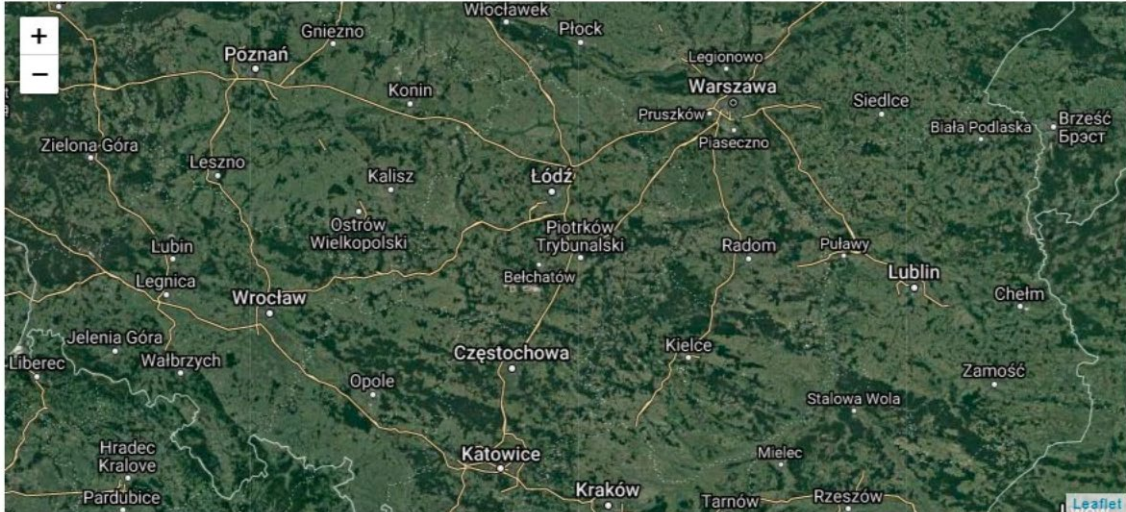
The survey concerning empty spaces has been sent out to various owners (and temporary guardians) of such properties:

- Public: Local Authorities, State Owned Companies, Trustees
- Non-Public: Real Estate Agencies, Church and Religious organisations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

Geo Questionnaire

The geo-questionnaire made it possible to provide the location of a specific property (Figure 1) and important details concerning the space.

Determine the location of the space by placing a marker on the map



Please provide the name of the institution you represent:

Please provide the name of the city where the property is located:

Please specify the Voivodship:

Define the location of the space by inserting a marker on the map
(Figure 1. Geo-questionnaire / Source: own study)

The description of the property began with a choice of property type:

- Non-Residential Property
- Commercial Property
- Residential Property

For each of these types, slightly modified characteristics were developed (Figure 2).

Is it a non-residential property?

Yes / No

What type of building is it?

budynek mieszkalny

Is the building out of use? PINB decision?

tak

Do you think the building could be adapted for housing purposes?

tak

Ownership status of this building?

właścicielem

How many separate vacant spaces are present in the building?

1

How many storeys does the building have?

1 kondygnacja naziemna

Is it a commercial property?

Yes / No

What type of building is it?

lokal usługowy/biurowy

Is the building out of use? PINB decision?

tak

Do you think the building could be adapted for housing purposes?

tak

On which floor is the space located? you can select more than one option

na parterze
na piętrze
w suterenie lub piwnicy
na poddaszu

Where is the space located? you can select more than one option

w centrum miasta
od frontu
w oficynie

Ownership status of this building?

właścicielem

Are there residential spaces (4 or more apartments in one building?)

Yes / No

How many apartments in the building?

4-5

Is the building out of use? PINB decision?

tak

Ownership status of this building?

właścicielem

On which floor is the space located? you can select more than one option

na parterze
na piętrze
w suterenie lub piwnicy
na poddaszu

(Figure 2. Sets of questions for individual types in vacancy/ Source: own study)

Survey Respondents

The survey was conducted using a geocoded form, created and developed for the purpose of the study. The questionnaire was sent by e-mail to all respondents in the database. A link was placed within the email with an invitation for the recipient to participate in the study. The database built for this study included almost 13 thousand unique e-mail addresses (Table 1). 255 responses to the survey were received.

Number of respondents in particular research groups	Number of responses
Local Authorities	2478
State owned companies	448
Syndicates (restructuring advisors)	1232
Real estate agents	7557
Housing communities	927
NGOs	112
Churches/ religious organisations	13
TOTAL	12935

Table 1. Number of respondents in particular research groups / Source: own study

The current database used by the IRMiR for research and information gathering related to the implemented activities and financed from subsidies was used to source contact details for municipal offices throughout Poland. The database containing contact details of restructuring advisors, was taken from the publicly available register of the Ministry of Justice (14) and then further verified to insure the inclusion of up-to-date information. The database of churches and religious associations was verified from information available on the website of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration (15). The current contact databases of State Treasury, real estate agencies and housing communities was acquired for a one-time use in the study from Panorama Firm. The list of NGOs active in the housing sector was compiled for the purposes of this study, considering the guidelines prepared by the commissioner of this report.

The invitations to this survey redirected the recipients to a specific form, which immediately identified the respondent as part of a particular group the survey was sent to. This made it easier to collate the responses by group classification due to the name of the municipality, company or enterprise contacted. Vacant property lists came predominantly from local authorities and the State Treasury. Reports concerning a lack of vacant properties came predominantly from organisations other than local authorities. There was a total lack of response from churches or religious organisations; closer examination of this indicated that real estate of the largest Polish churches is centrally managed by the Diocese (in the case of the Catholic Church and the Evangelical-Augsburg Church). Initial contact was made with trustees about a possible transfer of information, but no data was subsequently obtained. Figures are presented here in Table 2

Survey Responses by Number	Questionnaires	Inventories	Reported lack of Empty Spaces
Local Authorities	199	90	516
State owned companies	24	1	16
Syndicates (restructuring advisors)	0	0	0
Real estate agents	1	0	1
Housing communities	1	0	1
NGOs	0	0	0
Churches/religious organisations	0	0	0
TOTAL	225	91	534

Table 2. Survey responses by number / Source: own study

About 95% of invitations were sent on the 6th and 7th of May 2021, and the remaining 5% were sent on the 10th of May 2021. Due to the low number of responses, the first deadline (13th of May 2021) was extended and the response time for replies became the 20th of May. This allowed respondents more time to reply. The number of responses by specific dates is presented in the table below (Table 3).

Survey Responses by Date	13.05.2021	24.05.2021	30.05.2021	25.06.2021
Local Authorities	97	181	192	199
State owned companies	14	24	24	24
Syndicates (restructuring advisors)	0	0	0	0
Real estate agents	6	9	9	1
Housing communities	1	1	1	1
NGOs	0	0	0	0
Churches/religious organisations	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	118	215	226	225

Table 3. Survey responses by date / Source: own study

The number of responses between the 13th and 24th of May 2021 almost doubled, which can be attributed to additional activities undertaken in consultation with the commissioner of this report, as well as recognising that the first deadline for the completion of this survey was too short. From the information received from the respondent in the group "Local Authorities", it can be concluded that obtaining information about vacant properties owned by organisations other than the local authority required more time to find. This was subsequently confirmed in interviews with the respondents during the survey (16). Ten (10) Local Authorities submitted information on all vacant properties in their specified area in the form provided. These were typically smaller communities where vacant property information was collected from pre-existing available municipal data, as explained in subsequent interactions.

From the 25th of June 2021, no new survey responses were received, however several Local Authorities sent additional vacant property lists at that time. According to phone calls and e-mail correspondence, additional time was needed to prepare a comprehensive list, and such lists were subsequently sent by the 16th of July 2021. On receipt of these lists, information was entered into the geo questionnaire on vacant properties, and locations were plotted into the map. We received over two hundred and twenty-five (225) responses to the questionnaire and obtained ninety (90) lists from Local Authorities and one (1) from the State Treasury.

Based on the locations identified in the questionnaires (red markers) and the provided vacant property lists (blue markers), a fairly even geographic distribution of the information obtained can be determined (Figure 3). Information on empty spaces and vacant property lists will increase once data has been sent from all voivodships.



Figure 3. Geographical distribution of empty spaces in Poland / Source: own study

Data obtained from geo questionnaires (red markers) and from addresses overlaid on the map in municipalities sending vacant property lists in (blue markers).

14 <https://arch-bip.ms.gov.pl/pl/rejstry-i-ewidencje/lista-osob-posiadajacych-licencje-doradcy-restrukturyzacyjnego/> [28.04.2021].

15 <https://www.gov.pl/web/mswia/rejestr-kosciolow-i-innych-zwiazkow-wyznaniowych> [28.04.2021].

16 We wstępnych opracowaniach niektóre spółki gminne zarządzające nieruchomościami korzystały z linków identyfikujących je jako agencje nieruchomości. Klasyfikacja została uzgodniona z treścią deklaracji respondentów, czyli wypełnieniem ankiet w imieniu gminy. Usunięto jeden rekord, dokładnie powtórzony – ankietę nie wyświetlała komunikatu zapisania danych.

From the 13th to 20th May 2021, talks were also held with representatives of all state-owned companies located in the contact database and with the majority the respondents from the database being restructuring advisors, received confirmation of vacant spaces at the disposal of:

- 85 State owned companies, of which 80 declared participation in the study (filling in the questionnaire or sending a list),
- 10 restructuring advisers, eight of which directly refused to participate in the survey or forwarding the list, and two of them, despite contact attempts, did not provide further information.

The respondents were also asked to provide information on the lack of vacant spaces in their areas in the period covered by this report. We received five hundred and thirty-four (534) responses by e-mail about the lack of empty spaces and approx. two hundred (200) separate telephone declarations. These are mainly municipalities (516), state-owned companies (16), one property management company (agency) and one housing association. We distinguished the following declaration types:

- There are no vacancies in the stock.
- Lack of vacant spaces that can be used for housing purposes.
- No vacant properties that have not been used for more than 12 months.
- The respondent is not aware of any vacant properties in the area (including private ones).

In telephone transcripts and e-mail declarations, we once again found that due to the housing policies of local governments, any vacant yet structurally sound property is automatically allocated to waiting residents. Some respondents reported difficulties with identifying vacant properties due to their poor condition or unclear tenancy situation. In telephone conversations with the representatives of entities other than Local Authorities, it was indicated that there was little interest in renovation of vacant buildings for housing purposes as real estate intended for sale should already be empty.

To summarise, this study collected information from around eight hundred and twenty (820) local authorities, including five hundred and thirty-four (534) reports about a lack of vacant properties in designated areas. In the areas where empty spaces were reported, it was nine hundred and seventy-five (975) non-residential properties and over six thousand three hundred (6,300) residential properties (these numbers were accumulated from survey responses and provided vacant property lists). The list of local authorities with no vacant properties according to the declarations was attached to the final report.

3. Survey Conclusions

Main conclusions

The main conclusions drawn from the completed surveys and provided vacant property lists:

1) The survey reported one hundred and fifty-four (154) non-residential buildings of various types and sixty-seven (67) residential properties. The significant advantage of non-residential buildings over single occupancy properties is noticeable.

2) It was indicated that one hundred and eight (108) of the submitted properties may be used or adapted for housing purposes (including ninety-nine (99) from vacant real estate lists provided by local authorities, and nine (9) from vacant real estate lists provided by State Owned companies).

A) In the case of municipal real estate, most of the empty buildings will be used for housing purposes, but it should be noted that fifty-eight (58) out of the ninety-eight (98) indicated buildings that can be adapted already have a residential function.

B) Many of the spaces (sixty-eight (68) compared to the forty (40) that could be transformed) are too degraded/ in poor condition and do not meet standards or require too much expenditure for the respondents to positively assess their suitability for housing purposes.

C) In the case of twenty-two (22) buildings that were deemed suitable for transformation, the respondents informed us about the PINB (Poviat Building Supervision Inspectors) decision to withdraw them from use.

3) As part of the lists sent, eight hundred and seventeen (817) non-residential spaces and six thousand two hundred (6,201) residential and commercial properties were identified as vacant, including the largest number in Walbrzych. Detailed conclusions are presented for individual types of real estate.

Non-Residential Spaces

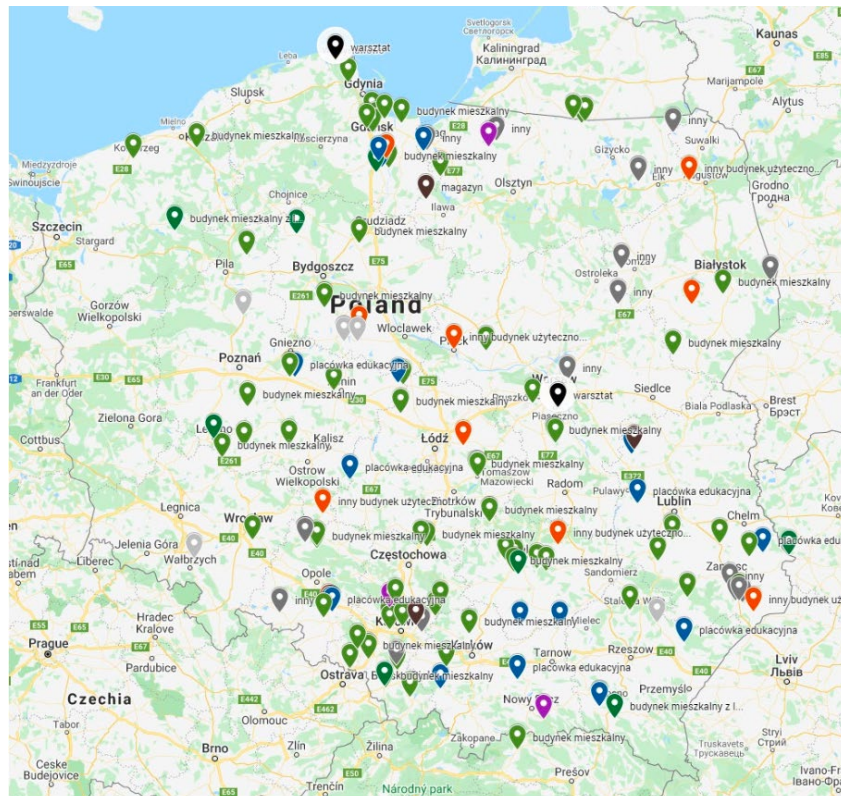
Among the vacant spaces reported in the survey, non-residential buildings dominate the numbers (Figure 4). One hundred and fifty-eight (158) non-residential spaces of various types were reported and only sixty-seven (67) were in relation to units in a building.



Figure 4. spaces and properties reported in the survey / Source: own study
 Legend: buildings (blue markers) and other spaces (orange markers).

Among the empty spaces identified in the survey, the majority of responses came from representatives of local authorities. The number of residential buildings (eighty (80) responses out of one hundred and fifty-eight (158)) was highest, followed then by vacant educational establishments, and finally - categories other than those mentioned (Figure 5). "Other" is an extensive category and includes spaces such as utility spaces that can be difficult to classify (e.g. former boiler rooms or halls), but also garages or ruins.

Representatives of state-owned companies identified eight (8) residential buildings and ten (10) "other" spaces. Where an empty space was reported by real estate agencies and housing associations, only 2 properties - both residential were identified. In total, the survey responses catalogued eighty (80) unique vacant residential properties. This number includes eight (8) residential properties with accompanying commercial space.



Rysunek 5. Budynki wg typu wskazanego przez respondentów

- Green – Residential building (80)
- Blue – Educational institution (24)
- Grey – Other (22)
- Orange – utility building (10)
- Green – Residential building with units (8)
- Purple – Office building (3)
- Brown – Warehouse (3)
- Black – Workshop (2)
- Other/No Value – (6)

Figure 5. Buildings according to type as indicated by survey response

The table below (Table 4) shows the various properties by type indicated by completed survey responses. In six (6) cases, the type of building was not indicated in the survey.

Building Type	Local Authorities	State owned companies	Real estate agent
Residential	72	8	2
Educational	24	0	0
Other	15	7	0
Utility	9	1	0
Residential/Commercial	8	0	0
Office	3	0	0
Warehouse	2	1	0
Workshop	1	1	0
TOTAL	134	18	2

Table 4. Properties by building type / Source: own study

The reported empty spaces listed can be considered for adaptation to housing purposes as it pertains to the main purpose of this study. The respondents to our survey were asked to assess whether the reported real estate could be used or further adapted for housing purposes. The answers are summarized in the table below (Table 5). Not all respondents examined the potential for adaptation or transformation – as stated before, six (6) cases were left unidentified, as indicated within this study.

Is it possible to transform for housing purposes?	Local Authorities	State owned companies	Real estate agencies
Yes	90	8	0
No	23	8	0
I don't know	21	2	1
TOTAL	144	18	1

Table 5. Potential of adapting the identified empty spaces for housing purposes / Source: own study

The map also shows the answers according to the indicated locations (Figure 6). In the case of municipal real estate, most of the empty buildings will be available for use in the provision of affordable housing purposes. It should be noted, however, that fifty-eight (58) out of ninety-eight (98) indicated spaces already have a residential function. Sadly, an overwhelming majority of empty spaces (sixty-eight (68) compared to forty (40) eligible for refurbishment) have been found to be in such states of disrepair that they no longer meet the eligibility standards or require too significant an investment to warrant further action.

In the case of twenty-two (22) spaces that could have the potential for renovation, the respondents of our survey have informed us about an existing PINB (Poviat Building Supervision Inspector) decision concerning demolition of such spaces.



Rysunek 6. Możliwość przystosowania budynku do celów mieszkaniowych

- Blue – Yes (98)
- Orange – No (31)
- Grey – Don't know (23)
- Light grey – Other (6)

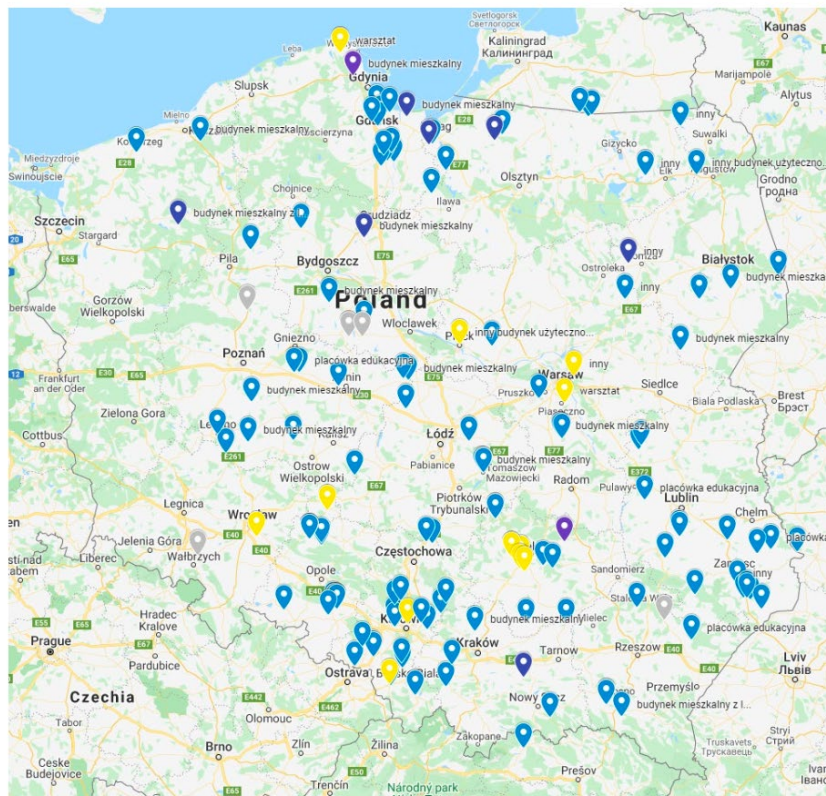
Figure 6. Potential adaptation of empty spaces for residential purposes / Source: own study

When asked about ownership and the right to dispose of vacant properties, for the most part the spaces were identified by the owners themselves (Table 6). Six (6) cases had no clear identification of ownership, according to the survey.

Ownership Status	Local Authority	State owned companies	Real estate agents
Owner	112	14	0
Manager	10	4	0
Co-Owner	8	0	0
Independent Holder	4	0	0
TOTAL	134	18	0

Table 6. The right to dispose of the declared buildings / Source: own study

The geographical distribution of the various ownerships reported are identified here on the map (Figure 7). Properties in possession or managed by the respondent are also scattered and is not a typical of any particular region. Blue markers are most prevalent and indicate the larger number of properties with defined ownership.



Rysunek 7. Budynki wg tytułu prawnego respondenta

- Blue – Owner (126)
- Yellow – Manager (14)
- Navy – Co-owner (8)
- Purple – Independent holder (4)
- Grey – Other/No Value (6)

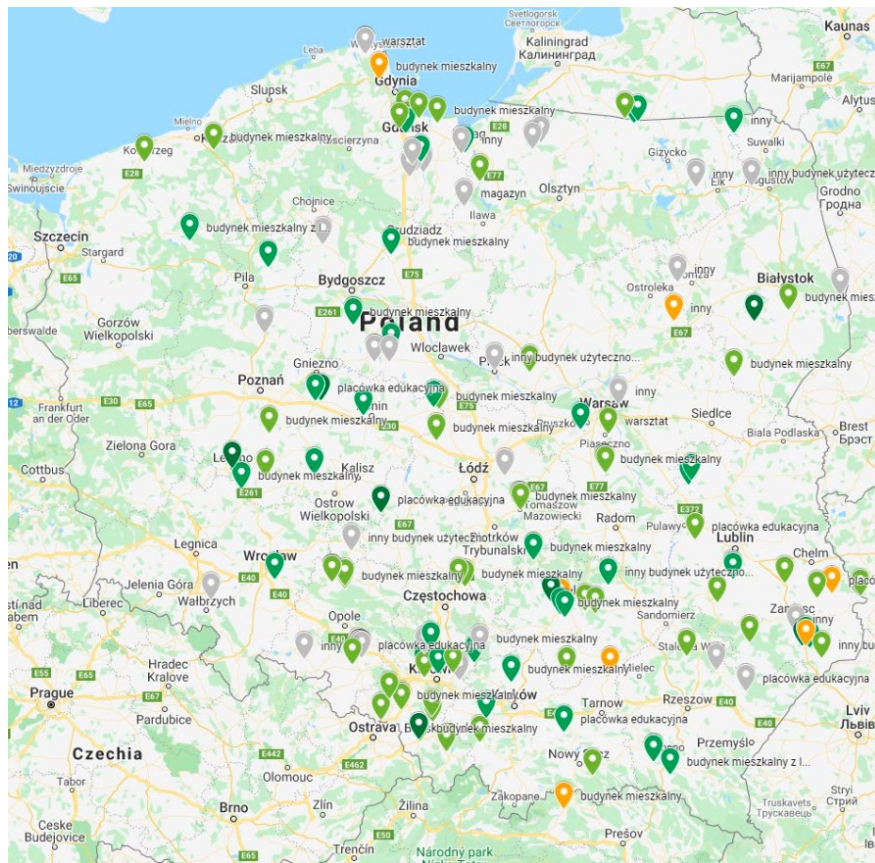
Figure 7. Buildings according to their ownership / Source: own study
Legend: Indicating the ownership of identified properties

Reported vacancies are usually buildings of several rooms at most. In many of them it is impossible to determine the actual number of rooms within the space (thirty-seven (37)) or whether the space contains just one room (fifty-six (56)). Seven (7) properties were indicated to include 11 or more rooms, forty-three (43) properties may have between 2 to 5 separate rooms (Table 7, Figure 8).

Number of rooms in the building	Local Authorities	State owned companies	Real estate agencies
1	45	11	0
2-5	41	2	0
6-10	8	0	1
11+	7	0	0
Unknown	32	5	0
TOTAL	133	18	1

Table 7. Properties according to the number of rooms / Source: own study

Smaller properties are more common, with a small number of rooms identified in such spaces in locations all over Poland. In the case of thirty-seven (37) buildings, the answer "unknown" for the number of rooms was indicated, and in the case of six (6) questionnaires, this field was left blank.



- Light green – 1 (56)
- Teal – 2-5 (43)
- Grey – Unknown (37)
- Forest green – 6-10 (9)
- Orange – 11+ (7)
- Dark Grey – Other/No value (6)

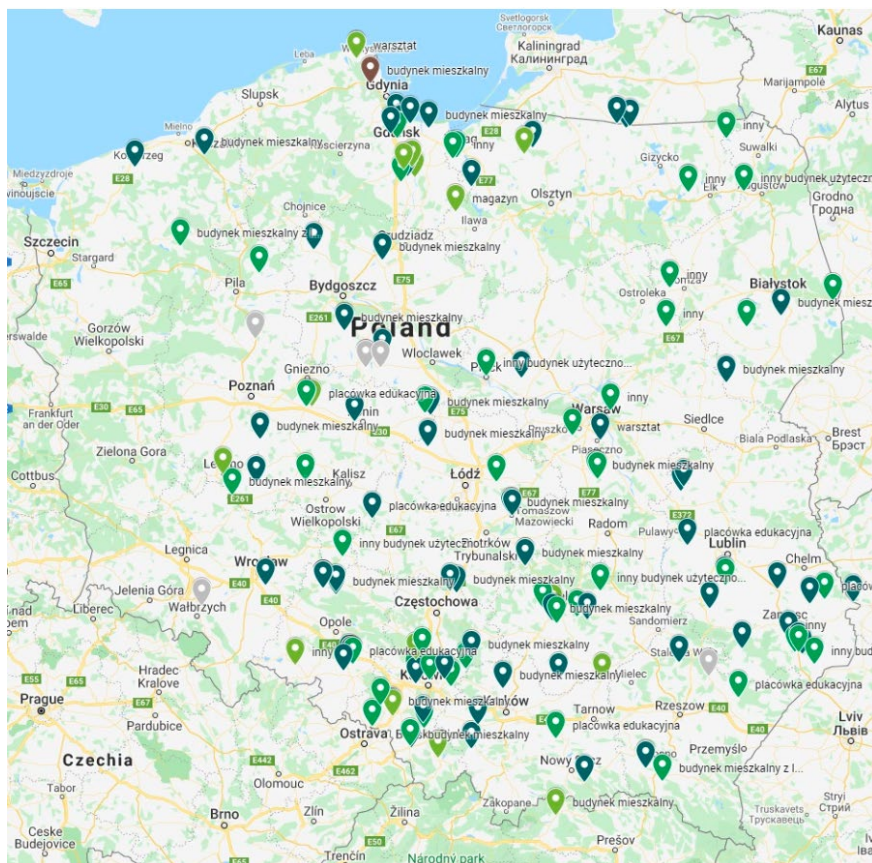
Figure 8. Buildings according to the number of rooms / Source: own study

Sixty-eight (68) of the buildings identified by local authorities were one-story properties (Table 8). Similarly, the responses in relation to buildings owned by state owned companies revealed similar percentage of one-story properties (although smaller numbers of properties were identified by state owned companies).

Number of overground storeys	Local Authorities	State owned companies
1 above ground storey	68	8
2 above ground storeys	50	7
3 above ground storeys	14	3
4 or more above ground storeys	2	0
TOTAL	134	18

Table 8. Buildings according to the number of above-ground storeys / Source: own study

The preliminary indications about the number of overground storeys coincides with the information identified concerning the number of rooms within a building. In six (6) questionnaires, the number of above-ground storeys was not indicated, though generally buildings with at least one storey are more prevalent; in fact, seventy-six (76) one storey properties were indicated by information from both local authorities and state-owned companies. Vacant properties with 4 or more storeys are practically non-existent (Figure 9).



Rysunek 9. Budynki wg liczby kondygnacji nadziemnych

- Teal - 1 above ground storey (76)
- Green - 2 above ground storeys (57)
- Light green - 3 above ground storeys (17)
- Brown 4 or more above ground storeys (2)
- Grey – Other/no value (6)

Figure 9. Buildings according to the number of above-ground storeys / Source: own study

Commercial Spaces

If the respondent chose to report the separate spaces as opposed to the entire building in the survey, the follow-up questions then concerned the categorisation of a given space. The spaces reported by the respondents could be marked as commercial or not. The distribution of these answers is presented on the map (Figure 10). There were twenty-five (25) commercial spaces indicated and forty-two (42) classified as residential.



Rysunek 10. Zgłoszone w geoankiecie lokale użytkowe i mieszkaniowe

- Orange – No (42)
- Blue – Yes (25)

Figure 10. Commercial and residential units reported in the survey / Source: own study

Responses from the survey indicated fewer commercial premises than residential. Among the spaces identified by local authorities, vacant office spaces were prevalent, and the "other" category was indicated in second place (Table 9).

Type of building	Local Authorities	State owned companies
Service/office space	14	2
Warehouse	2	0
Workshop	1	0
Other	6	0
TOTAL	23	2

Table 9. Types of commercial premises by groups reported by respondent in survey / Source: own study

Vacant spaces in buildings scattered across the country were still reported (Figure 11). Some designations may overlap if a respondent from a given area has completed a survey detailing multiple spaces.



Rysunek 11. Lokale użytkowe wg typu

- Purple - Service/office space (16)
- Green - Other (6)
- Moss - Warehouse (2)
- Yellow - Workshop (1)

Figure 11. Commercial premises by type / Source: own study

Most of the spaces reported by local authorities cannot be adapted for housing purposes as per the opinion of the survey respondent (with nine (9) answering "No", and six (6) answering "I don't know"), in the case of ten (10) identified spaces indicated with the survey. (Figure 12). In nine (9) cases, these were communal commercial units. One space submitted by state owned companies indicated possible adaptation to this effect (Table 10).

Type of business space	Local Authorities	State owned companies
Service/ office space	6	1
Warehouse	1	0
Other	2	0

Table 10. Possibility of adapting business premises for housing purposes / Source: own study

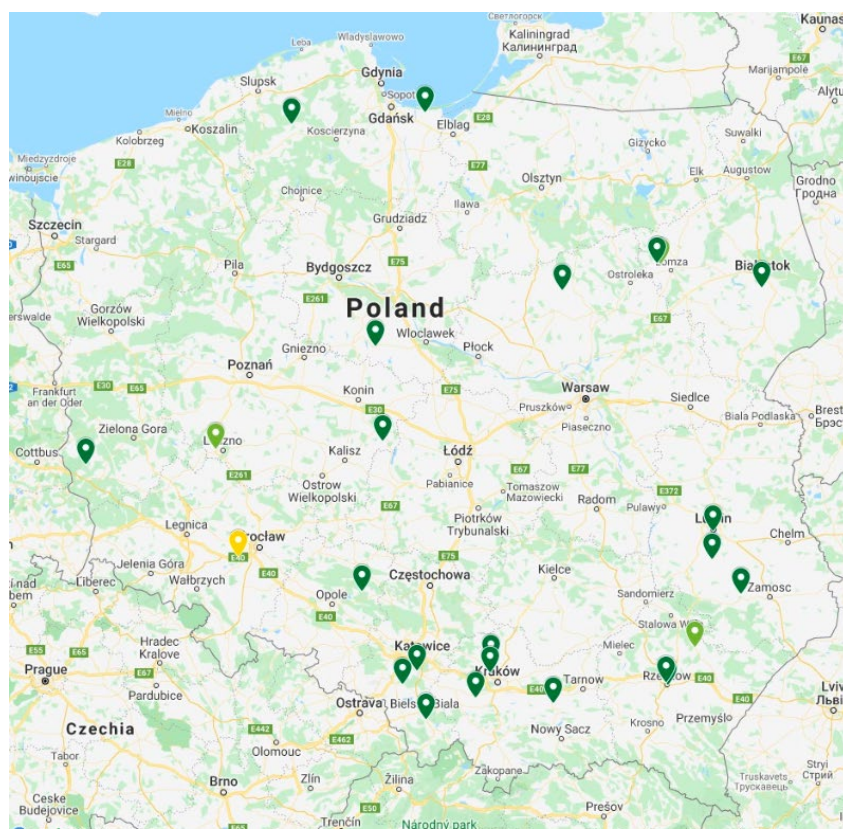


Rysunek 12. Możliwość zmiany przeznaczenia lokali na cele mieszkaniowe

- Green – Yes (10)
- Red – No (9)
- Yellow – Don't know (6)

Figure 12. Possibility of changing the purpose of vacant spaces for housing purposes / Source: own study

The empty spaces reported do largely belong to the individuals or organisations reporting them in the survey. Twenty-one (21) of the commercial properties were reported by the owners, three (3) by co-owners, and one (2) by the entity managing the property.



Rysunek 13. Tytuły prawne do zgłaszanych lokali użytkowych

- Dark Green – Owner (21)
- Light Green – Co-Owner (3)
- Yellow – Manager (1)

Zgłaszający jest dla danego lokalu:
Źródło: opracowanie własne.

Figure 13. Ownership of the reported business premises / Source: own study

The empty spaces reported do largely belong to the individuals or organisations reporting them in the survey. Twenty-one (21) of the commercial properties were reported by the owners, three (3) by co-owners, and one (2) by the entity managing the property.

Most of the empty spaces were located on the ground floor (eighteen (18) out of twenty-four (24) municipal properties), and only six (6) covering the remaining options. One (1) case reported multiple storey inhabitation, located on the both the ground floor, first floor and attic (Table 11).

Location on the premises	Local Authorities	State owned companies
On the ground floor	18	0
On the first floor	3	0
In the Attic	1	1
In the Basement	1	0
Other	1	0

Table 11. Location of the business premises within the building / Source: own study

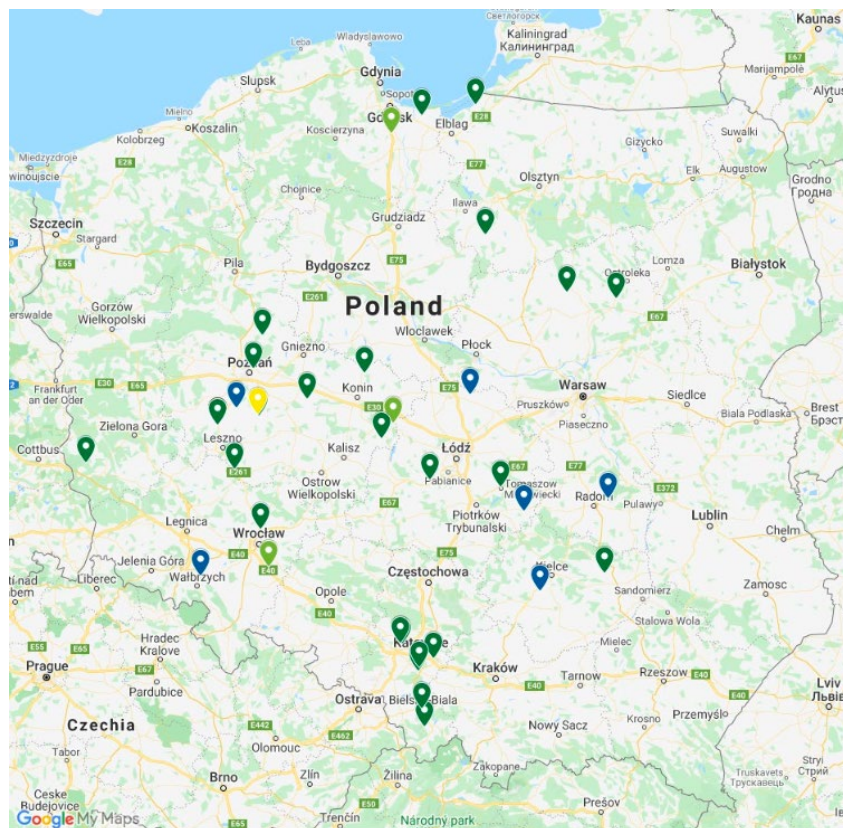
Residential Spaces

In regard to residential spaces, the majority of them were reported by their owners, although the surveys indicated joint ownership and management in 1/3 of the properties recorded. These options were only indicated by local authorities (Table 12).

The right to dispose of the space	Local Authorities	State owned companies	Real estate agents
Owner	24	4	2
Manager	8	0	0
Co-Owner	3	0	0
Independent Holder	1	0	0
TOTAL	36	4	2

Table 12. The right to dispose of identified residential spaces / Source: own study

The geographical distribution of the residential spaces reported in survey have been included on the map. Again, a large proportion of reported properties can be observed across Poland (Figure 14). There were less vacancies in housing than empty commercial premises.



- Green – Owner (30)
- Blue – Manager (8)
- Lime – Co-owner (3)
- Yellow – independent (1)

Figure 14. Residential spaces by ownership / Source: own study

The reported residential spaces were most often located in small multi-family buildings: nineteen (19) in buildings with a maximum of 5 apartments, and another twelve (12) among communal spaces in buildings with up to 10 apartments (Table 13).

Number of spaces in the building	Local Authorities	State owned companies	Real Estate Agents
2-5	18	1	0
6-10	12	0	0
11+	5	0	2
Unknown	1	3	0

Table 13. Number of spaces in the building / Source: own study

Again, the map records no clusters or regions where smaller or larger buildings are more prevalent than another. Vacant spaces in buildings with up to 5 apartments from different voivodeships have been identified, similarly in the case of buildings with 6 to 10 apartments and the largest, more than 10 apartments (Figure 15).



Rysunek 15. Budynki ze zgłoszonymi mieszkaniami wg liczby lokali mieszkalnych

- Maroon – 2-5 (19)
- Purple – 6-10 (12)
- Green – 11+ (7)
- Brown – unknown (4)

Figure 15. Buildings with reported dwellings by the number of dwellings / Source: own study

Exclusions from use

Among the reported real estate, there was a relatively large number of spaces excluded from use as per the decision of the construction supervision authority (PINB). The respondents asked about the inclusion of such real estate, but the definition used in the study, i.e. a room or an empty building that has been vacant for more than 12 months, was reaffirmed to them once more. This also included records of spaces not used due to poor conditions. As a rule, uninhabited and decommissioned buildings were not included in the lists of the local authorities housing resources. A summary of all information on PINB decisions is presented in Table 14.

Local Authority:

Excluded from use by the PINB decision	Non residential Buildings	Utility/Service Buildings	Residential Buildings	TOTAL
Yes	30	1	5	36
No	88	19	31	138
Don't Know	16	4	0	20
TOTAL	134	24	36	194

State owned companies:

Excluded from use by the PINB decision	Non residential Buildings	Utility/Service Buildings	Residential Buildings	TOTAL
Yes	6	0	0	6
No	11	2	4	17
Don't Know	1	0	0	1
TOTAL	18	2	4	24

Real estate agencies:

Excluded from use by the PINB decision	Non residential Buildings	Residential Buildings	TOTAL
Yes	0	0	0
No	0	2	2
Don't Know	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	2	2

Table 14. Properties excluded from use by the PINB (Poviat Building Supervision Inspector) / Source: own study

Vacant spaces, buildings, dwellings and commercial properties listed as pending demolition or decommission are also scattered throughout Poland (Figure 16). In a few cases, geographic markers overlap. This is an indication that respondents filled out questionnaires for different types of spaces that could be located in the same neighbourhood or even in the same building.



Rysunek 16. Wszystkie zgłoszone nieruchomości wyłączone z użytkowania przez PINB

- Blue – Local Authority (36)
- Green – State owned companies (6)

Figure 16. All reported properties are excluded from use by PINB / Source: own study

The empty spaces reported do largely belong to the individuals or organisations reporting them in the survey. Twenty-one (21) of the commercial properties were reported by the owners, three (3) by co-owners, and one (2) by the entity managing the property.

Possibility of adaptation for housing purposes

The question regarding possible adaptation of identified real estate for housing purposes was formulated in a way that allowed for a subjective assessment, not for obtaining a professional appraisal supported by an analysis of the buildings condition. There were still twenty-nine (29) “I don’t know” responses, but most subjects managed to provide a positive indication (Table 15).

Local Authority:

Adaptable for housing purposes?	Non-residential spaces	Commercial spaces
Yes	90	10
No	23	9
Don't Know	21	8
TOTAL	134	27

State owned companies:

Adaptable for housing purposes?	Non-residential spaces	Commercial spaces
Yes	8	2
No	8	0
Don't Know	2	0
TOTAL	18	2

Table 15. Possibility of adaptation for housing purposes / Source: own study

Much of the property is already residential, and by analysing existing inventories, case studies and revitalization program, we can better identify a properties suitability, particularly in the context of decommissioning/demolition.

Up to July 16, 2021, we received eighty-nine (89) vacant property lists from local authorities and one (1) from Polish State Railways. The lists were as follows:

- Brief note – thirty-six (36),
- Basic statement – forty-nine (49),
- Detailed statement – four (4).

Brief notes were usually limited to the number of buildings or spaces not used for more than 12 months, along with their addresses. In basic statements, more data was provided, concerning the type of empty space (building, commercial or residential property). Brief notes and basic statements have made it possible to calculate the identified spaces but doesn't provide much other details. The list provided by PKP S.A. (Polish State Railway) can be classified as a basic statement - it contained detailed addresses of buildings with nine hundred and fourteen (914) apartments located in sixteen (16) voivodships. Detailed statements included comments concerning lease withdrawals, structural/technical issues and other comments about the suitability of the property.

A total of eight hundred and seventeen (817) buildings were identified in the lists submitted, and include the following:

- Residential buildings – twenty-nine (29),
- Non-residential buildings – twenty-three (23),
- Farm buildings – twenty-nine (29),
- Residential/ Commercial buildings – fourteen (14)

10 villages sent lists of all properties that may be vacant in their area (Raczki, Jejkowice, Łanięta, Wronki, Michałów, Maków Podhalański, Gromadka, Stryszów, Radzanów, Olszyna, Skoroszyce). In each case, the reported number of vacant spaces exceeded the resources of local authorities verified in relation to their WPGMZG (commune housing resource management policy). It is important to note that many of the submitted lists were prepared with information from registers that were available at that time. The communities mentioned, which have identified empty spaces belonging to private owners, are rural communities (eight (8)) and small rural-urban communities (two (2)).

Six thousand two hundred and one (6,201) residential and commercial properties were also identified, the largest number in Watbrzych, broken down into different types of classification within the city (two thousand three hundred and ninety-seven (2,397) units), in Bytom (one thousand two hundred and eighty-one (1,281) units) and in the dispersed resources of PKP SA (Polish State Railway), (nine hundred and fourteen (914) units)).

It should be noted that while some of the registers contained information about housing units, and number of apartments within these properties, other lists contained only data about the units, without information on how many buildings they could be located within. The number of spaces indicated here does not include units located in the buildings indicated above.

In the case of responses from seventy-nine (79) villages, the exact addresses of the reported properties were made available which allowed us to record their location, but questionnaire was not completed due to a lack of detailed data on the real estate in question, even if there were less than 5 empty spaces.

The lists submitted provide the following information:

- Usable area of empty spaces in – nine (9) municipalities,
- Number of units within the identified buildings – eight (8) municipalities,
- The right to dispose of real estate – six (6) municipalities,
- The potential of adaptation for housing purposes of non-residential spaces – Six (6) municipalities,
- Number of plots/lands – seven (7) municipalities,
- PINB decisions – four (4) municipalities.

The submitted inventories prove that there is no standard and readily available lists at the disposal of municipal real estate managers. More extensive inventories are needed with additional comments showing current problems like properties excluded due to poor structural conditions, a lack of utilities (water, sewage), the need to upgrade the heating systems of vacant properties and finally greater technical issues like mining damage and building degradation.

The problem arises due to an overlap of legal changes; mainly the division of a building into several apartments years ago and the issues surrounding new leasing contracts, legal issues surrounding the renting of vacant properties and identification of the number of rooms in a given building, or a change concerning the division of resources into municipal and social properties into municipal and social lease contracts.

Several detailed inventories contain notes that the spaces have been transformed for temporary habitation or that the rooms do not meet the current safety requirements and are withdrawn from lease. The submitted inventories did not examine the possibility of transforming buildings and properties into apartments. Technical problems and changes in the standards of the properties themselves and their access to the media often mean the need to renovate entire buildings and exclude them from use, the inventories include one (1) comment on the planned demolition of buildings and four (4) comments on the decision of PINB

Submitted inventories also highlight the variety of available real estate: three (3) manor complexes, six (6) former school buildings, former hospital buildings, twenty-nine (29) farm buildings and twenty-three (23) non-residential buildings, as well as twenty-nine (29) residential and fourteen (14) residential/commercial buildings. In the case of ten (10) submitted inventories (two (2) detailed and eight (8) basic), there is no information about empty buildings themselves but only information about the number of units within.

Inventories of large municipalities and cities are kept with the aim of improving the rotation of tenants in their properties. With greater resources and identified issues concerning specific properties, it would also be necessary to analyse the structural condition in terms of the buildings in which they are located.

In summary, in accordance with the definition of empty spaces adopted for the purposes of this study (i.e. properties or buildings vacant for longer than 12 months prior to the survey), eight hundred and seventeen (817) non-residential buildings were identified, and six thousand two hundred and one (6,201) residential/commercial properties were identified; a total of seven thousand and eighteen (7,018) various vacant spaces throughout Poland. A significant portion of them are residential properties, according to the notes provided in the provided inventories, and many require renovation or reconstruction before they can be rented out. It is not known how many buildings and premises could be adapted to the residential function as few of the inventories contained information concerning construction supervision decisions or the general condition of the buildings.

5. Case studies of selected cities

Our case studies are based on interviews with people dealing with municipal real estate in specific cities, (residential and commercial properties), and supported by shared vacant property inventories or extracts from databases to the extent necessary for this study, as well as other documents concerning specific properties described. The "Multiannual Management Programs ..." and revitalization programs were used as part of this study and, in the case of Kielce, additional information was provided by a non-governmental organization operating with the city.

Warsaw

Scale of the empty spaces problem in the city

Warsaw is the capital of the state and the Masovian Voivodeship, covers an area of 517.2 km², and its population is 1,794,166 people. As a significant academic centre, the seat of state authorities and a large labour market with low earnings, Warsaw is a developing city and directly impacts neighbouring towns and villages. Also in Warsaw, the highest average prices per m² of flats sold on the primary and secondary market are recorded, as well as the highest market rents, which is related to the need for an active policy of the city in issues related to housing support, resource management and its general expansion.

1,886 buildings are owned by the City of Warsaw; 75% of the buildings, being the exclusive property of the city, were built before World War II, and 17.7% of buildings are in a state of disrepair. This is associated with the many challenges faced in upgrading utilities in the buildings in line with the current standards, insulation and heating technology related to the reduction of "low emissions", and refurbishment of current amenities like bathrooms or kitchens (or kitchenettes in apartments). Many of the resources within a building fall under the purview of the maintenance workers, which must be considered not only in the planned renovation or reconstruction, but also in everyday management.

Where a building has fallen into disrepair, demolitions are often planned as the sale of apartments, buildings or plots of land (even in such poor states) is allowed only in strictly defined cases and only after a careful analysis. The property will be surveyed to see if there is potential to use for the needs of the district and city. In the case of buildings already decommissioned, thorough analysis of building development plans is performed in accordance with the procedures for demolition, or new construction if local legislation allows it, and should it prove more economically profitable than just renovation and reconstruction of the existing building.

According to WPGMZG Warszawa, small buildings with up to 4 apartments will not be the city's target resource, especially if the necessary expenditure on the renovation of these buildings significantly exceeds the cost of building similar apartments. Such buildings, if they do not meet the criteria or can be used for other social activities of the city, will be sold. (Buildings will only be sold if they are uninhabited).

Warsaw's problem is real estate for which there are pre-existing ownership claims. On the basis of the decree of October 26, 1945 on the ownership and use of land in the area of the capital city of Warsaw (Journal of Laws No. 50, item 279), the state took over land and surviving real estate within the pre-war city limits. Each of the previous owners, their heirs or legal successors could apply to the court for the return of the property. Since 2015, returns have been discontinued, but court proceedings regarding returns are still pending and there is no legal solution to the problem. Real estate where the city is the primary or co-owner are gradually evacuated of their tenants, along with the expiring apartment lease contracts, which are not allocated to new residents, nor are they renegotiated, but only secured.

In Warsaw, building management takes place within 18 districts, either through the districts themselves or their Real Estate Management Plants. The Housing Policy Office is responsible for the supervision of the entire property stock, the development of procedures and standards, planning and investments, as well as the conduct of the entire housing policy in Warsaw. There is a great diversity of resource in various conditions within the districts. The greatest demand for renovation of empty spaces from local property resources comes from the districts of Praga Północ, Śródmieście, Wola and Praga Południe, as well as other districts with larger pools of vacant real estate. The Integrated Revitalization Program covers the areas of Praga Północ, Praga Południe and neighbouring Targówek, as mentioned above, due to problems in this area surrounding basic infrastructure, the condition of buildings and the living conditions of the inhabitants, along with social and environmental problems.

At the end of 2020, Warsaw's housing stock was comprised of four thousand six hundred and twenty (4,620) empty spaces in the entire stock of eighty-one thousand three hundred and ten (81,310) residential units. These empty spaces are residential units that are not located in buildings undergoing existing renovation or scheduled for demolition (Table 16). Two thousand four hundred and twenty-three (2,423) units may be occupied, but a significant amount may already be earmarked for renovation (one thousand nine hundred and eighty (1,980)), and four hundred and forty-three (443) units were discovered following new construction or after renovation. Three hundred and sixty-seven (367) units in Praga Południe, three hundred (300) in Bielany and two hundred and forty (240) in Praga Północ were vacant. At the same time, the largest number of vacant properties yet unsuitable for settlement due to claims and exclusions from operation was found in Praga Północ (six hundred and forty-five (645)), Śródmieście (four hundred and thirty-one (431)) and Ochota (three hundred and thirty-five (335)). There were one hundred and seventy-six (176) substandard and non-lettable units, of which eighty (80) were located in Praga-Południe.

Empty Spaces	To be settled		Unable to be settled	
	District	New/Renovated	For Renovation	Claims/Exclusions
Bemowo	7	1	0	0
Białołęka	4	7	0	0
Bielany	72	228	19	0
Mokot	28	155	335	27
Ochota	4	60	16	53
Praga Południe	30	337	133	9
Praga Północ	78	162	645	56
Rembert	9	11	0	0
Śródmieście	21	423	431	87
Targówek	15	11	31	0
Ursus	30	17	7	0
Ursynow	8	0	0	1
Wawer	20	33	15	0
Wesota	0	0	0	0
Wilanow	0	0	0	0
Włochy	15	147	74	0
Wola	76	366	188	24
Żoliborz	26	22	44	2
TOTAL	443	1980	1938	259
TOTAL	2423		2197	

Table 16. Vacant property rates in Warsaw / Source: own study based on data provided by BPL UM Warszaw

There were four hundred and fifty-two (452) properties suitable for settlement, with central heating, but requiring renovation and empty for over 2 years. Five hundred and ninety-one (591) units (at the end of 2019, data from WPGMZG) were leased to more than one tenant, partial vacancies and after the expiry of such agreements, there were one hundred and seven (107), not intended for further lease, most of them found in Śródmieście and Ochota.

The definition of empty spaces adopted by this study, defined for the purposes of reporting to the Central Statistical Office and for the internal needs of the Housing Policy Bureau, may differ significantly. In Warsaw it was assumed that a vacant property is an empty space in both the physical and legal sense: without an ongoing contract, claims to the property or building, not offered to any person from the waiting list at any given time, not occupied without a contract by any persons, free from the previous tenant's belongings and technical condition allowing for lease. There are usually only a few such properties, but the collection procedures after the end of the lease, subsequent verification of the structural condition of the property and necessary decisions concerning building works, and finally activities related to rent: proposing to potential tenants and waiting for decisions can often mean that the property is uninhabited for over 12 months.

According to the data from the end of May, the entire stock of commercial properties in Warsaw comprised of eight thousand five hundred and eighty (8,580) units, while five hundred and seventy-five (575) commercial units were indicated as vacant spaces. The highest number of vacant commercial spaces was reported in the districts of Śródmieście (one hundred and fifty-eight (158) out of two thousand eight hundred and forty-nine (2,849)) and Praga Południe (one hundred and thirteen (113) out of one thousand and fourteen (1,014)). There are no vacant commercial properties in Bemowo and Wesoła. The commercial and service premises were mostly empty (275), one hundred and thirty-seven (137) office premises accounted for quite a significant amount of the vacant spaces, and also eighty (80) warehouses, workshops, restaurants and others (twenty-three (23) properties each) were included in the breakdown by category. The last item "to be reclassified, or in a poor structural condition" included fourteen (14) properties.

The tenants are responsible for the renovation and reconstruction of commercial properties - adapting the space to suit their needs and the nature of their activity, therefore the structural condition is not an obstacle when looking for tenants, and in the case of properties requiring major renovation and improvement, their function may also be changed, but they will still remain a commercial property. There are more tenant changes than in previous years due to the pandemic; and due to the reduction in rents adopted by the city authorities, the revenues from this have also decreased. Warsaw, however, still has many commercial properties in attractive locations and significant profits are generated from their lease. Commercial units are even rented in buildings intended for major renovation or in the property subject to claims - following the appropriate procedures. Contracts for the lease of commercial units that define a set period of time make it possible to plan renovation works and complete the lease before their commencement.

The reasons for the lack of development of empty spaces

The inventories and interviews indicate three main reasons for underdevelopment of vacant spaces in Warsaw: poor structural conditions, failure to meet essential residential standards and existing claims on real estate. Properties intended for further lease and qualified for renovation, due to tender procedures, may be unoccupied for periods longer than 12 months. Properties in need of improvement, utilities and redevelopment may require the renovation of the entire building or the availability of access for installations to be carried out through other apartments and spaces. In the Warsaw inventory, the greatest attention is paid to heating and thermo-modernization, the heat input from the municipal network is preferable, whenever it is possible and economically justified. With such improvements, access to all rooms in the building is essential.

"The renovation and modernization need of buildings and properties within the City significantly exceeds the current financial possibilities and exceed the 6-year time frame."

(Quote from: Diagnosis doWPGMZG Warsaw for the years 2021-2025, page 110).

In Warsaw, it is currently not possible to rent an apartment while it is being renovated and on the basis of an appropriate agreement to settle the renovation expenditure within the rent itself.

Factors affecting the possibilities of adapting vacant residential and commercial properties for housing purposes

Commercial properties are not transformed into residential spaces, due to the technical requirements and location, often due to shading, noise, and a lack of usable area.

Commercial properties are often used for activities that benefit the local communities, either directly by municipal or district institutions, or in the form of preferential leases for non-governmental organizations, to be used as their base of operations. If the spaces do not attract tenants for a long time, are in undesirable locations, then according to procedures set forth by the Housing Policy Office, they will be recommended for sale; the possibility of changing the use will not be considered.

Large apartments from the municipal stock, (over 80m² of space), can be considered as spaces to carry out other tasks for the community. It is possible to exclude them from the housing stock should there be a need for them to perform other tasks for the community; like being used as protected and supported housing, in partnership with non-governmental organizations. Such actions are possible if there are no eligible and needy families on the waiting list for such a large apartment. In Warsaw, due to the general condition of the housing stock and the number of empty spaces in housing inventories, acquiring apartments for the stock is mainly concentrated in the construction of new buildings and general renovation of entire properties, adjusting them to current standards. No conversion of commercial properties is part of the city's residential development plans. There was one case of reclassification of a business unit into a residential one.

Changes are planned regarding the demolition of non-residential buildings (pavilions - former offices of the district ZGNów) and the construction of new ones in their place, with mixed, utility and residential functions. It is not a direct reconstruction or the change of use of an existing building, but a replacement of entire buildings altogether.

The change in the purpose of one apartment from utility to residential function concerned the specific needs of a family already living in a council flat. The family lived in an apartment on the upper floor, and its member was in a wheelchair and required help in their everyday life. Due to the fact that it is located in the immediate vicinity of the social services necessary for the family and strong neighbourly networks, the decision was made to transform the service room on the ground floor of a tenement house in the vicinity of the family's residence into a residential unit without architectural barriers. After the reconstruction was completed, the family decided not to move, and the property was transferred to the housing stock as an apartment without architectural barriers. No financial profitability analysis was carried out for this one case, because it was a response to the specific needs of the inhabitants. The workload and the number of people and specialists involved in the procedures related to this reconstruction were significant, so there are no plans to repeat such projects. Planned and executed reconstructions and the construction of new spaces consider the current regulations on accessibility and barrier-free properties.

Due to the large amount of work and external financing obtained by the city, projects concerning entire buildings are preferred in the housing policy of Warsaw, and as a result of this it is possible to obtain apartments and other spaces with good technical parameters and adapted to current standards. There is at least a dozen such premises in Warsaw. Such buildings, whether completely new or subject to major renovation, can serve again for years to come. Therefore, work is currently underway on the reconstruction of several existing buildings, as well as the construction of new, on-site, small buildings previously used for office functions (ZGNów district pavilions, in 14 locations). The current buildings, which do not meet the standards even for office buildings, will be demolished and new mixed-use buildings will be erected in their place. Part of the ground floor will still have utility functions, and apartments will be built above. Commercial units, currently designed as part of such changes and in new buildings, are usually not for rent, but are intended to serve the implementation of key community activities in the given area. There will be areas for libraries, day cares or local activity centres, and depending on local needs, kindergartens are also considered. The housing units will be built according to current practices of the highest quality. Comparing the previous and currently approved policies of WPGMZG Warsaw, the implementation of new planned buildings has already been postponed.

Zawiercie

Scale of the empty spaces problem in the city

Zawiercie is a city in the Silesian Province. It is the seat of Zawiercie County. The area of Zawiercie is 85,25 km² and the population stands at 49, 204 inhabitants. It is located in the central part of the Kraków-Częstochowa Upland. It is very well connected by rail with Warsaw and the Upper Silesian-Zagłębie Metropolis and is becoming an increasingly attractive place to live. As a result of economic transformations it is classified as medium-sized households losing their socio-economic functions. The presented case study illustrates the active management of real estate resources, in which unused premises are quickly identified, and an active renovation policy leads to their quick re-use, even in the case of apartments for major renovation.

As of the end of April 2021, one hundred and nine (109) empty spaces in Zawiercie were located in over fifty (50) buildings scattered throughout the town. The greatest concentration was found in the area designated for revitalization (around the Old Market Square, the TAZ estate and the outskirts of the city), where other social and environmental problems exist. Most of the empty spaces are located on Westerplatte, Niedziałkowskiego, Marszałkowska and Apteczna Streets. Most of the residential spaces are located on the ground floor and the first floor. These are usually small units (a room with a kitchen), with an area no larger than 40m². More than twenty (20) apartments do not have a bathroom or toilet (they are located in an exterior corridor), and in one case, outside the building. The undertaken and planned renovation activities related to the existing housing stock in the area of revitalization are to contribute to the improvement of the buildings structural condition and utility services of the buildings in the area.

The technical condition of buildings is determined in accordance with the following categories:

- To be inhabited – twelve (12) apartments, including seven (7) after renovation,
- To be refurbished or renewed – fifteen (15) apartments after evictions,
- For renovation – forty-six (46) apartments,
- Private renovation (deducted from the rent) – three (3) apartments,
- For major renovation – thirty-three (33) apartments, of which six (6) have already started renovations.

Analysis of the exclusion period of the above-mentioned properties shows that the period of adapting the spaces for further lease lasts, depending on the buildings condition, from several months to several years and is derivative of the necessary renovation expenditure. Most often, the vacant property inventory includes spaces that were qualified for social rent and no longer meet the requirements of a renewed lease without further modernization.

There were empty spaces in fifty-two (52) buildings, with only one (1) building completely evacuated. In the remaining ones, there were predominantly empty single room apartments, though a few were vacant 2 to 5 room apartments.

Commercial properties in Zawiercie are not classified as vacant according to the definition adopted in the study, because they are transferred to lease on an ongoing basis and proceedings for rent are currently underway. In the case of properties that remain vacant for a long time despite tenders, measures are taken to temporarily develop, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations or local artists. This favours economic recovery and allows the commercial properties to be reintroduced into the economic circulation, although it requires expenditure on renovation on the part of the city or a temporary tenant.

The reasons for the lack of development of empty spaces

The main reason for undeveloped empty spaces is the structural condition of the building. Without the renovation of utilities (sewage, gas, central heating), it is not possible to offer them for rent to the residents of Zawiercie.

An additional difficulty is the arrangements with the conservation officer, especially in the case of buildings, where significant interference with the structure of buildings is necessary in connection with the separation of bathrooms and toilets in individual apartments. Apartments that qualified for major renovation remain unused for the longest time, though conducted activities planned in the Multi-Year Housing Resource Management Program of the City of Zawiercie for 2021-2025 are being gradually carried out.

Factors affecting the possibilities of adapting vacant residential and commercial properties for housing purposes

In Zawiercie, no farm buildings or commercial properties in the areas real estate stock, which could be adapted for housing purposes, have been identified. There are, however, private buildings, redevelopment of which would be possible, however owners are not interested in exploring this potential, mainly for economic reasons.

The main factor limiting the redevelopment of empty spaces is financial issues and the need for large scale renovations, often the most expensive. Renovations are financed primarily from the city's budget, including rental income and compensation for non-contractual occupancy of said property. The town also uses external funds, including the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management, the Provincial Conservator of Monuments (applies to buildings under conservation protection) and EU funds. In particular, the Zawiercie district implemented the project "Revitalization of a degraded building in the TAZ estate in Zawiercie for adaptation to assisted and protected housing" under the Regional Operational Program of the Śląskie Voivodeship for 2014-2020. Zawiercie at 22 Niedziałkowskiego Street (the total cost of the project was PLN 2,736,177.13.) Thanks to this project, it was possible to restore the housing function of a degraded building in the historic TAZ estate.

Thirty-six (36) buildings owned by the district and located within the housing estates: Stary Rynek, Centrum, Argentina and within the TAZ estate, have been selected for comprehensive renovation. By the decision of the Provincial Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management in Katowice, a number of buildings with vacant spaces were also selected for co-financing under the project "Thermomodernization of residential buildings in the Zawiercie district", which will be related to major renovations. Due to the significant demand for apartments in Zawiercie, "returning" apartments to the stock after capital renovations will be an important impulse for the local housing market, alongside new municipal investments which are also planned.

Kielce

Scale of the empty spaces problem in the city

Kielce is a city in south-eastern Poland, the capital of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship. According to data from the Central Statistical Office, 193,415 people lived in Kielce at the end of 2020. The presented case study illustrates the active management of real estate resources, in particular, efforts to adapt non-residential buildings for housing purposes, both by municipal units and non-governmental organizations active in Kielce and its vicinity.

As at the end of April 2021, there were one hundred and forty-two (142) empty spaces in Kielce within around fifty (50) buildings scattered throughout the city. The greatest concentration of said spaces occurred in the centre of Kielce near Plac Wolności, as well as in the Czarnów and Herby housing estates, where there other social and environmental issues exist. Most of the spaces are dispersed, within a building there are often 1-3 empty spaces. Due to the intensity and concentration of social problems in one of the residential buildings at Młodej Street, the building has been gradually evacuated, and residents are moved to housing in other locations. The building is planned to be demolished due to the level of decapitalization.

Apart from residential spaces, the list also includes two non-residential spaces. These have been identified in buildings formerly used by schools. At 7 Bartosza Głowackiego Street there is a building which once housed a music school, and at Jana Nowaka-Jeziorańskiego street, there a few buildings that once formed part of the former school complex.



Figure 17. The building at Mtodej Street in Kielce / Source: IRMiR



Figure 18. The building that once housed a former Music School in Kielce, a general view of the main entrance/ Source: IRMiR



Figure 19. Buildings of the former school complex at Jana Nowaka-Jeziorańskiego street in Kielce / Source: IRMiR.

The reasons for the lack of development of empty spaces

An important context of the problem of vacancy in Kielce is the queue of people waiting for flats, which numbers around eleven hundred (1,100) people, with about three hundred (300) families waiting to rent a council flat, while the rest of the people are waiting for social housing.

The main reason for undeveloped vacant spaces is the technical condition of apartments, and often the entire building. Without major renovations, it is not possible to offer them for rent. In some apartments, claims for the return of tenement houses result in the suspension of renovations. Around 65% of buildings, however, are degraded to such an extent that demolition would be more appropriate. As some of the premises are still used in these buildings, they are gradually evacuated, but the created empty spaces are not settled. The remaining empty spaces (around 35%) are undergoing renovation as much as possible, and the units are gradually returning to the housing stock.

With regard to apartments in the best technical condition, the city also conducted two editions of the Mieszkanie za Remont Program (Apartment for renovation Program) in a competition. Both editions enjoyed great interest. In the first edition, around one hundred and sixty (160) applications were submitted. Some families registered several apartments at the same time in order to be able to rent a council apartment. It should be emphasized that this formula can be used by the most resourceful and determined people waiting for council housing. Not only do they need to apply, but also finance and complete the renovation on time. There are still people who cannot afford such renovation or who will not be able to cope with the competition procedure.

The program selects apartments in relatively good condition, where renovation is possible on your own. For this reason, the 'most difficult' ones still remain as vacant spaces. Therefore, despite the relatively large number of units in the Apartment for Renovation program, they cannot be treated as a resource that will shorten the queue of those waiting for council housing. Therefore, the city undertakes new investments. The Nowe Jeziorany estate is a great success and is both comfortable and adapted to the needs of the people living there who might have special individual needs. There is also a local activity centre which engages residents, officials and non-governmental organizations to create an atmosphere for the communal care of the space. The city is also undertaking the adaptation of non-residential buildings for housing purposes, e.g. documentation of two such investments concerning the schools described above is currently being prepared.

Factors affecting the possibilities of adapting vacant residential and commercial properties for housing purposes

Many factors determine the suitability of adapting a building for housing purposes. First of all, its structure and the provisions of planning documents are important. In the case of the aforementioned school buildings that the City of Kielce intends to adapt for housing purposes, there are no obstacles in this regard along with no other identified legal barriers.

The area of the fifty-three (53) plots on Jana Nowaka-Jeziorańskiego street amounts to a total of 4.1771 ha. The property is being developed from a former school building and a detached building with garages and a transformer station. The property also has a fenced and illuminated football pitch with an artificial grass surface with two fixed gates, six portable gates and three roofed shelters for referees and players.

The usable area of the former school building is 13,896.00 m² and, according to KOB, the building has 4 floors. It has a reinforced concrete skeleton structure. The concrete roof is lined with roofing felt, the façade is plastered though traces of damage due to the lack of maintenance works have been identified. The building is equipped with utility installations: electricity, water, sewage, gas, central heating and hot water.

The site of the former school complex on Jana Nowaka-Jeziorańskiego street includes several buildings, which have been gradually developed for the needs of the local community since the school was closed several years ago. A separate sports section is used almost all the time - the gymnasium and the ORLIK pitch. The remaining buildings were used to varying degrees.

The building that is of most interest to the city authorities for the purpose of adapting for housing purposes is the building which is the most repaired on the map above (Picture 21). Initially, it was supposed to be adapted to meet the needs of one of city of Kielce's geological technicians, but the estimated costs of the adaptation were too high. The preliminary assessment of the construction feasibility of the facility and the estimated costs of its adaptation for housing purposes prompted the city authorities to decide on the preparation of municipal flats in this building instead.

It will be a valuable addition to the overall vision of the complex as a local centre of social services offered by various sectors. Medical facilities are planned in the northern buildings of the plot - in one, a centre for supporting people with neurodegenerative diseases and their families, and in the other, a clinic for premature babies. Design work is underway to prepare these adaptations. In turn, the southern area of the complex is a socio-cultural function. The building located closest to the sports facilities is currently partly used by a Catholic organisation known as "Free zone". It is a place where children and adolescents from nearby estates (large housing estates Świętokrzyskie, Na Stoku and Stoneczne Wzgórze) can spend time taking advantage of organised sports and play activities, for which the abandoned building is perfect. There are plans to adapt the whole building with the goal of renovating the inner courtyard-amphitheatre together with the youth, which will also serve cultural activities and their promotion among residents. In the southernmost building, there will be a large media library. One floor is currently used for this purpose, but further development is planned. The last building once housed a private university, but due to the pandemic, the contract is being terminated. A social element is also planned to complement the functions of the entire complex.



Figure 20. Top view of the former school complex on Jana Nowaka-Jeziorańskiego street in Kielce / Source: Municipal Building Management in Kielce.



Figure 21. Mapping the area of the former school complex at Jana Nowaka-Jeziorańskiego street

Similar plans concern the building that once housed a music school at Głowacki Street (Figure 18), which has been abandoned for 12 years. The city commissioned the development of project documentation, which should be prepared by the end of August this year. The aim is to create residential properties, but to also introduce a socio-cultural function in the commercial units on the ground floor of the building, where a small concert hall used by the music school was once located. As the Kielce Philharmonic is located on the other side of the street, it is considered to further develop a cultural activity corresponding to it on the ground floor of the building.

In the context of factors influencing the adaptation of non-residential spaces for housing purposes, it is also worth noting the experience of Caritas, of the Kielce Diocese, which for many years has been systematically creating housing opportunities for people in need of help. The resources of Caritas of the Kielce Diocese currently include around ninety (90) protected apartments and independent living spaces of various sizes and standards. The smallest rooms have an area of 12-16 m² with shared bathrooms and kitchen spaces. The largest unit is a three-room apartment with private bathroom (56 m²). Apartments are grouped by several to a dozen or so within individual buildings, often as adaptations of pre-existing spaces, like abandoned schools located in rural areas. The first adaptation for housing purposes was carried out in Wiśniówka near Kielce in 2007. The renovation of the former KKK employee hotel in Wiśniówka was financed from the funds of the "Springboard" of the PHARE Access Program. Nine (9) spaces were adapted to the needs of individuals leaving the prison system. The model of the facility's operation was very successful - as many as 60% of these individuals became sufficiently independent. Currently, it serves as housing for whole families in difficult financial situations.

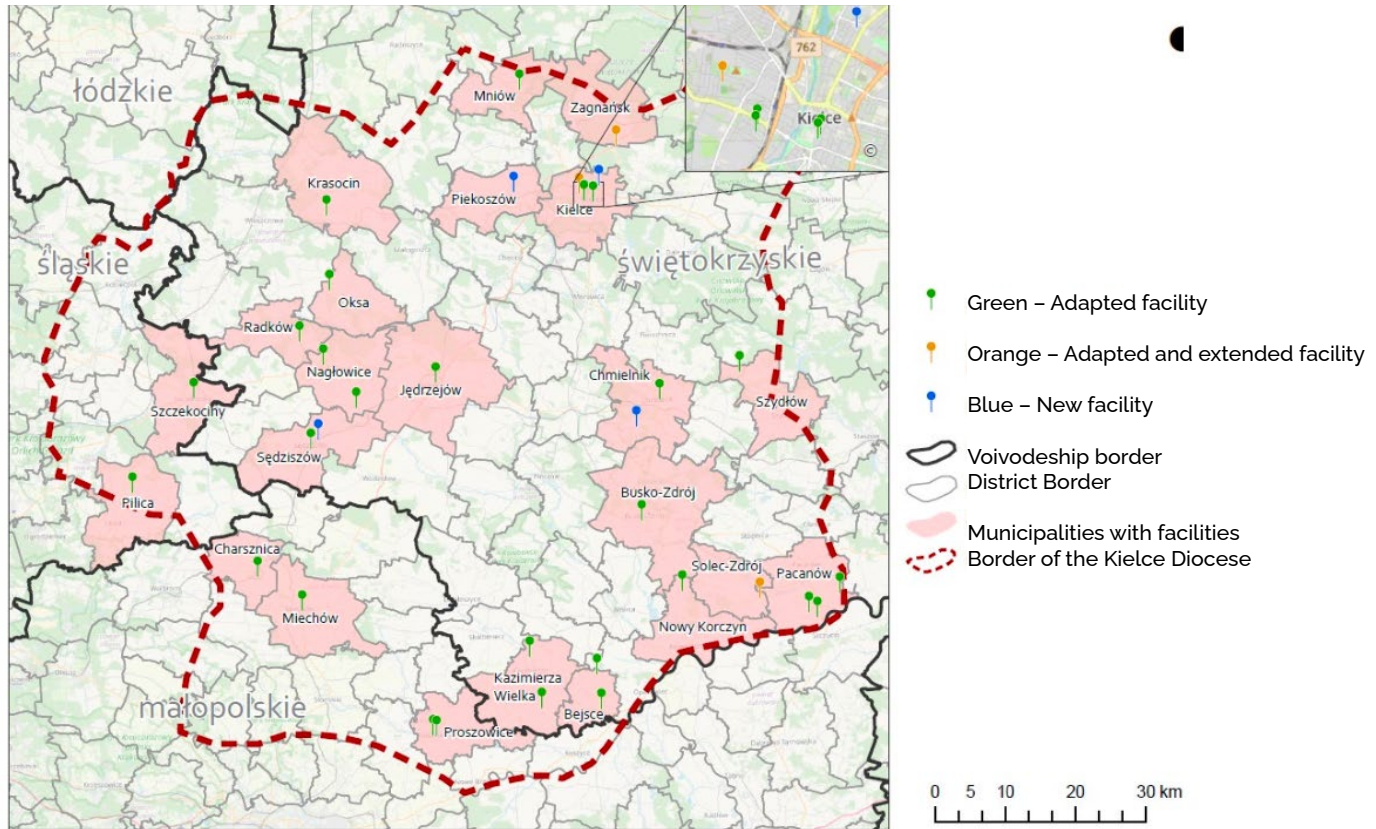


Figure 22. Map of the building with social functions of Caritas in the Diocese of Kielce / Source: own study based on data provided by Caritas of the Kielce Diocese

In the case of some locations, there are several spaces at one address. Green points mark places whose existing spaces have been adapted to serve new functions. Orange points indicate addresses adapting the existing buildings to the construction of new ones. The blue dots, on the other hand, are newly created spaces.

The costs of creating and operating sheltered apartments in new buildings are around PLN 2,600-3,200 / m² at 2019 prices, i.e. around PLN 80,000. for the whole space. In the context of renovation and adaptation, the costs usually fluctuate between PLN 25-40 thousand for a comparable space and are much more cost-effective. Caritas of the Kielce Diocese is also very active in finding new sources of financing for renovation activities, from the EU or national funds, or through regional and private funds. In this case, financial assemblies are much more complex than in public projects, which sometimes results in the need to work in stages.

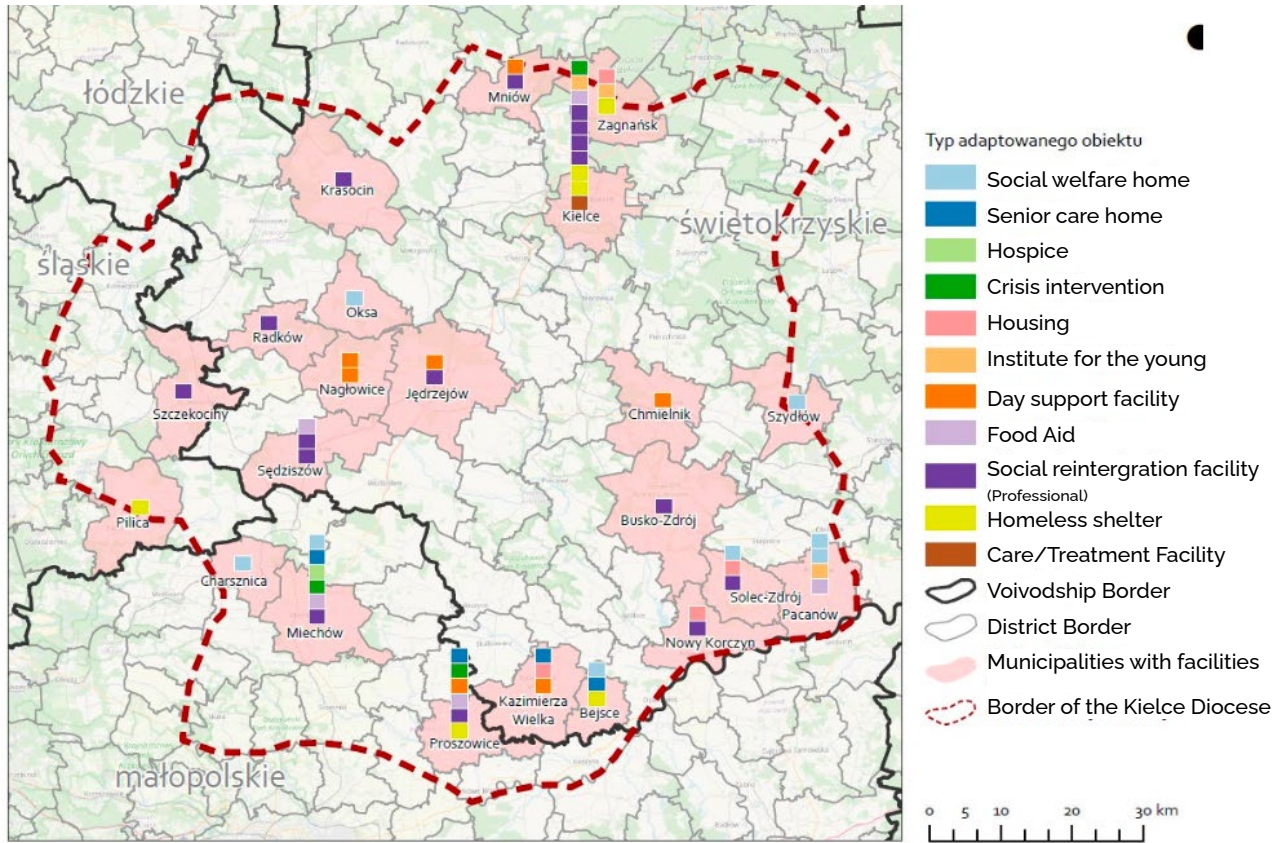


Figure 23. Types of functions in adapted Caritas buildings of the Kielce Diocese / Source: own study based on data provided by Caritas of the Kielce Diocese.

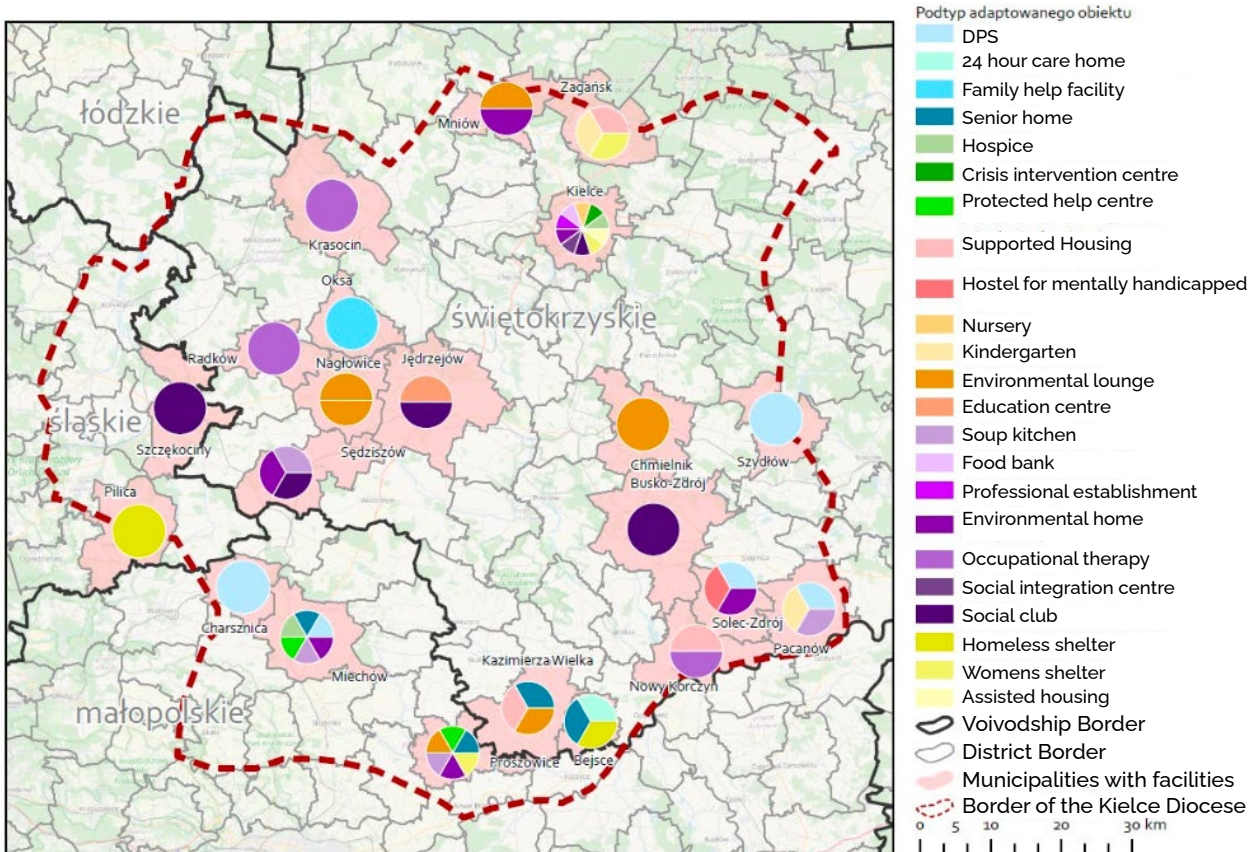


Figure 24. Social functions of the adapted building in Caritas of the Kielce Diocese / Source: own study based on data provided by Caritas of the Kielce Diocese.

Figures 23 and 24 refer to the types and subtypes of the current activity of an adapted space, without new facilities. Eleven (11) types and twenty-three (23) subtypes have been identified. For Figure 23, each individual bar element represents one functioning space of the type indicated within the legend. Similarly, in Figure 24, each individual piece of the pie chart represents one feature of the given subtype. The colours of the subtypes correspond to the corresponding types.

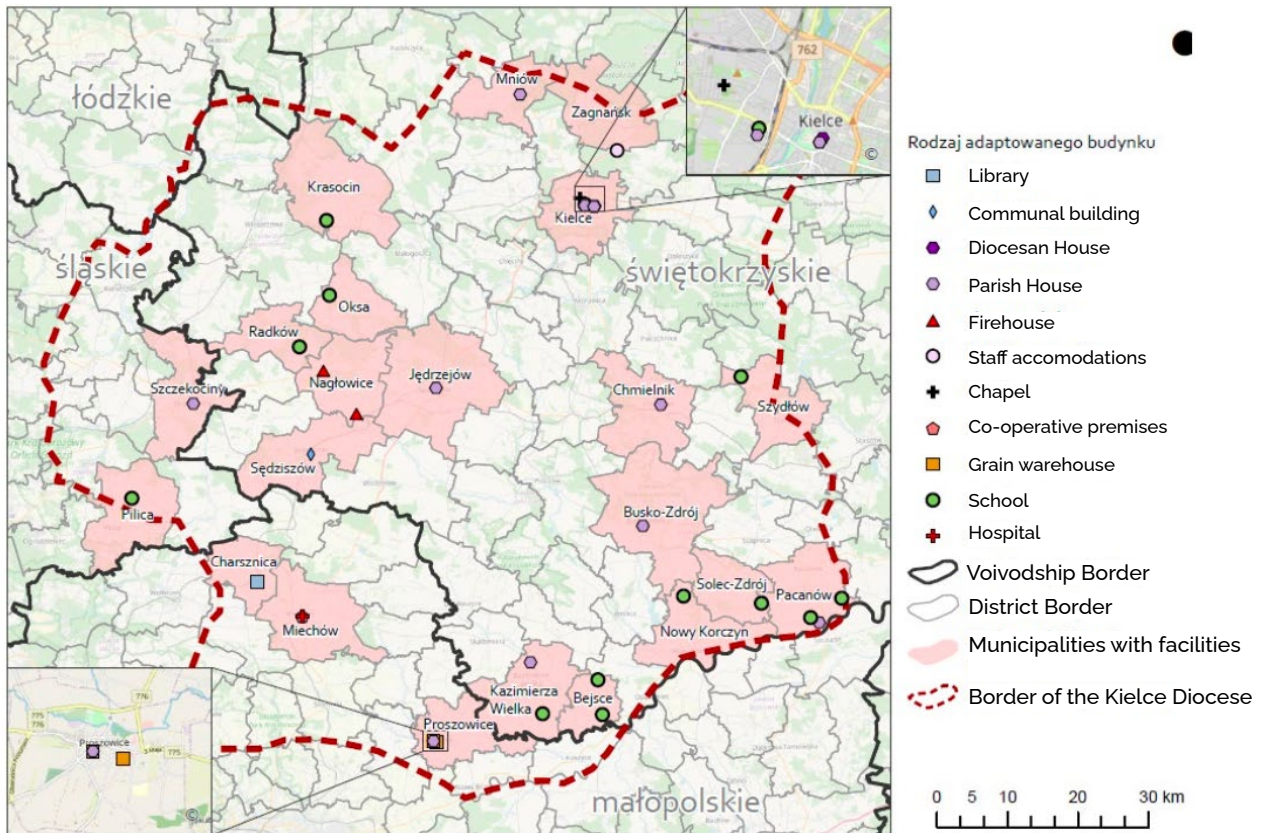


Figure 25. Primary functions of the adapted buildings of Caritas of the Kielce Diocese / Source: own study based on data provided by Caritas of the Kielce Diocese.

Figure 25 shows the original functions of the adapted objects. In the town of Proszowice, there is a former grain warehouse and a parish house located at one address. On the other hand, in the town of Miechów, at the same address, there was a hospital and a cooperative unit.

The wide range of Caritas' activities, the accumulated experience and knowledge, as well as the trust and the possibility of involving local communities and very different institutions in subsequent projects allow the use of very different types of vacant spaces and their return to a proper function. Some of the buildings used were previously intended for human habitation (schools, public buildings and the like), therefore the costs of re-purpose may still be less than the construction of new residential and commercial spaces, and some may retain the function of a community serving facility: care home, after-school clubs and other, more specialized social services. The organization is not based on a repetitive pattern of building type or effect, but on a very active dialogue within local communities and institutions that may be involved in the implementation of activities in a given place.

In the case of some locations, there are several spaces at one address. Green points mark places whose existing spaces have been adapted to serve new functions. Orange points indicate addresses adapting the existing buildings to the construction of new ones. The blue dots, on the other hand, are newly created spaces.

The costs of creating and operating sheltered apartments in new buildings are around PLN 2,600-3,200 / m² at 2019 prices, i.e. around PLN 80,000. for the whole space. In the context of renovation and adaptation, the costs usually fluctuate between PLN 25-40 thousand for a comparable space and are much more cost-effective. Caritas of the Kielce Diocese is also very active in finding new sources of financing for renovation activities, from the EU or national funds, or through regional and private funds. In this case, financial assemblies are much more complex than in public projects, which sometimes results in the need to work in stages.

Summary

The detailed information collected as part of the case studies leads to conclusions consistent with the previous analysis of the vacant property inventories reported in the real estate survey.

- 1) In the cities for which the case study was conducted, there were a total of four thousand eight hundred and seventy-one (4,871) empty spaces, predominantly located in Warsaw. Business units are rented out faster than the vacancy rate assumed for the definition of this study: 12 months. In addition to the indicated almost 5,000 housing vacancies, city resources also included non-residential buildings or buildings excluded from use, increasing the number of all empty spaces (according to the definition adopted in this study). Housing stock, in cities and towns, for rent is strictly controlled.
- 2) The housing resources of local authorities require very large repairs and improvements, many buildings are in a such a poor condition that they qualify for demolition. For such large investments, the financing of the converging rents and fees is insufficient, it is necessary to obtain additional financing from sources other than the city or towns budget.
- 3) Legal problems related to claims regarding the return of tenement houses, changes in the rules of renting flats and spaces from local authority resources lead to the emergence of vacant buildings - former social spaces or those rented as part of larger apartments. The legal changes also reflect the general improvement in the standard of housing and greater requirements regarding energy efficiency, heating, available utilities and the independence of municipal premises.
- 4) Local authorities are building new council housing, although this is still not a scale that can meet the demand or even replace the resources withdrawn from use. In the case of Warsaw, changes in the use of buildings are not considered, because the housing stock to be renovated is so large, but cities like Kielce are just changing the purpose of spaces like former school buildings to a variety of new functions, including housing.
- 5) Particularly noteworthy are the activities of Caritas of the Kielce Diocese, geographically far beyond Kielce and encompassing the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, part of Silesia and Lesser Poland. Caritas cooperates with local governments and local communities to deal with the adaptation of empty spaces and renovation of buildings with the intention to provide a wide variety of social services, including housing for people and families in crisis, in the form of sheltered and assisted housing.

6. Data on empty spaces in public statistics

The public statistics in the Local Data Bank of the Central Statistical Office of Poland include apartments which are not inhabited by residents of the town or city (vacancy). They were collected until 2009 on the basis of the SG-01 report, part 3, and from 2011, on the basis of the modified M-01 report, every 2 years. The latest available data is from 2018. It should be noted that this is only data on housing resources and no other information is recorded, e.g. free commercial properties. There is no information about empty buildings, including those excluded from use by PINB decisions. The data in the CSO's BDL does not contain information on the length of the period in which a property has remained unused, so they may be characterised by high variability depending on the approach to recording and classification of vacant properties within a specific town or city. Therefore, it is somewhat possible to identify empty spaces at the time the report was created, regardless of the length of the period of non-use, and according to a specific period, e.g. analogous to the lack of use assumed in this study for at least 12 months.

The data on all uninhabited properties is provided by the Central Statistical Office every 10 years, on the basis of data obtained from the census. Failure to assign registered persons or persons indicating a given premises as the place of permanent residence on the day of the census results in marking the space as unoccupied. Data from 2011 is currently available. There were then around five hundred and thirty-four thousand, seven hundred (534,700) uninhabited properties (representing 4% of all properties) plus four hundred and seventy-nine thousand, five hundred (479,500) uninhabited buildings (representing 8% of all properties) that contained at least one apartment.

The analysis of the number of vacant properties by region shows a very high differentiation (Table 17). The largest number of empty spaces as of 2018 was recorded in the Mazowieckie voivodship with over eleven thousand (11,000) recorded, slightly less in the Łódzkie and Śląskie voivodeships, out of a total of fifty-four thousand, two hundred and six (54,206) identified empty spaces. An upward trend was observed in all voivodships, with the lowest number identified in the Lubelskie voivodship. In the years 2003-2018, the number of vacant spaces increased by 9%. The highest increase was observed in the Pomeranian voivodship (an almost six-fold increase in the number of empty spaces in the period undergoing this study), and slightly lower in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship (almost five-fold). On average, the number of vacant properties in the regions increased 2.7 times. One could argue that the described changes came as a result from the increase in the number of vacant spaces itself, and more from changes in the approach to their recording and recognition in the characteristics of municipal housing resources, though this would require additional research to draw a full conclusion.

Voivodship	2003	2005	2007	2009	2013	2015	2016	2018
DOLNOŚLĄSKIE	3513	1744	3432	4753	5446	5984	5394	5641
KUJAWSKO-POMORSKIE	452	347	555	1058	1337	1792	2496	2224
LUBELSKIE	544	587	876	683	615	708	637	591
LUBUSKIE	388	352	390	526	524	967	1142	1240
ŁÓDZKIE	3379	3108	3938	3997	6317	7754	8536	10737
MAŁOPOLSKIE	710	730	855	660	1091	1332	1465	1796
MAZOWIECKIE	4508	4565	5976	6553	9746	10553	10898	11438
OPOLSKIE	715	598	895	861	919	1061	1076	1110
PODKARPACKIE	442	390	410	426	489	587	692	739
PODLASKIE	403	326	356	715	504	505	538	512
POMORSKIE	449	668	822	1116	1916	2491	2055	2690
ŚLĄSKIE	3946	4296	5231	5755	6675	8298	9277	10162
ŚWIĘTOKRZYSKIE	168	384	332	319	400	362	398	508
WARMIŃSKO-MAZURSKIE	377	599	606	674	885	907	979	1192
WIELKOPOLSKIE	666	439	806	822	1631	1713	1575	1841
ZACHODNIOPOMORSKIE	1044	828	1308	1236	1350	1373	2076	1785
TOTAL	21704	19961	26788	30104	39845	46367	49234	54206

Table 17. Number of empty spaces by voivodships in 2003-2018 / Source: Local Data Bank, GUS

The differences in data by regions in 2018 is presented on the map below (Figure 26)

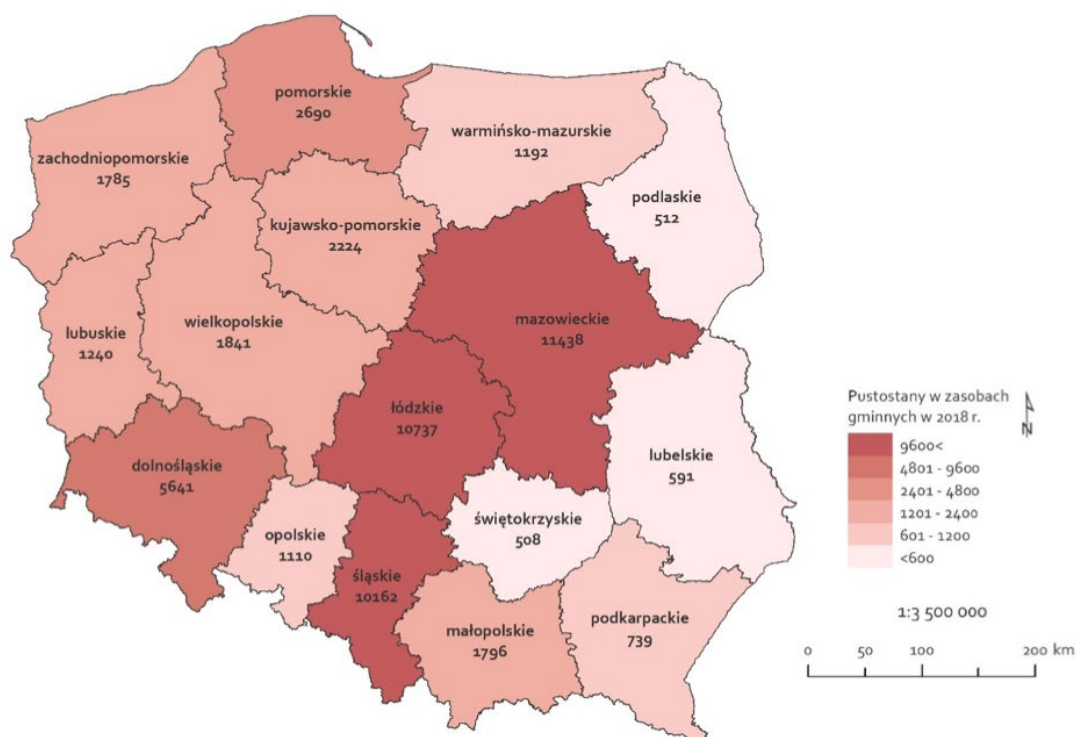


Figure 26. Variety of empty spaces by region (2018) / Source: own study on the Local Data Bank of the Central Statistical Office

The analysis by districts, without considering cities with district status, also shows significant differentiation. The largest number of vacant properties (with a very noticeable jump between 2016 and 2018) in 2018 was recorded in the Pabianice district. The table below (Table 18) lists the districts with at least two hundred (200) vacant units in 2018. There is a clearly visible concentration of empty spaces in the Łódzkie, Mazowieckie, Śląskie and Dolnośląskie voivodships.

District	2003	2005	2007	2009	2013	2015	2016	2018
Pabianice County	45	32	62	123	238	431	413	1959
Kędzierzyn-Koźle County	126	110	168	179	243	323	323	370
Zgierz County	96	66	83	131	129	190	197	336
Otwock County	18	48	59	54	97	138	162	304
Gliwice County	44	72	77	91	117	144	199	273
Będzin County	52	73	204	51	227	342	374	267
Piaseczno County	10	14	63	36	59	141	157	227
Kłodzko County	167	172	171	171	253	212	145	222
Żyrardów County	154	136	177	179	123	139	131	220
Wałbrzych County	422	201	593	1081	138	198	248	219
Świdnica County	82	132	211	156	186	210	227	218
Racibórz County	139	126	137	87	170	167	184	201

Table 18. Change in the number of empty spaces in the districts with the highest intensity in 2018 / Source: Local Data Bank, GUS

The differences in data by regions in 2018 are presented on the map below (Figure 27)

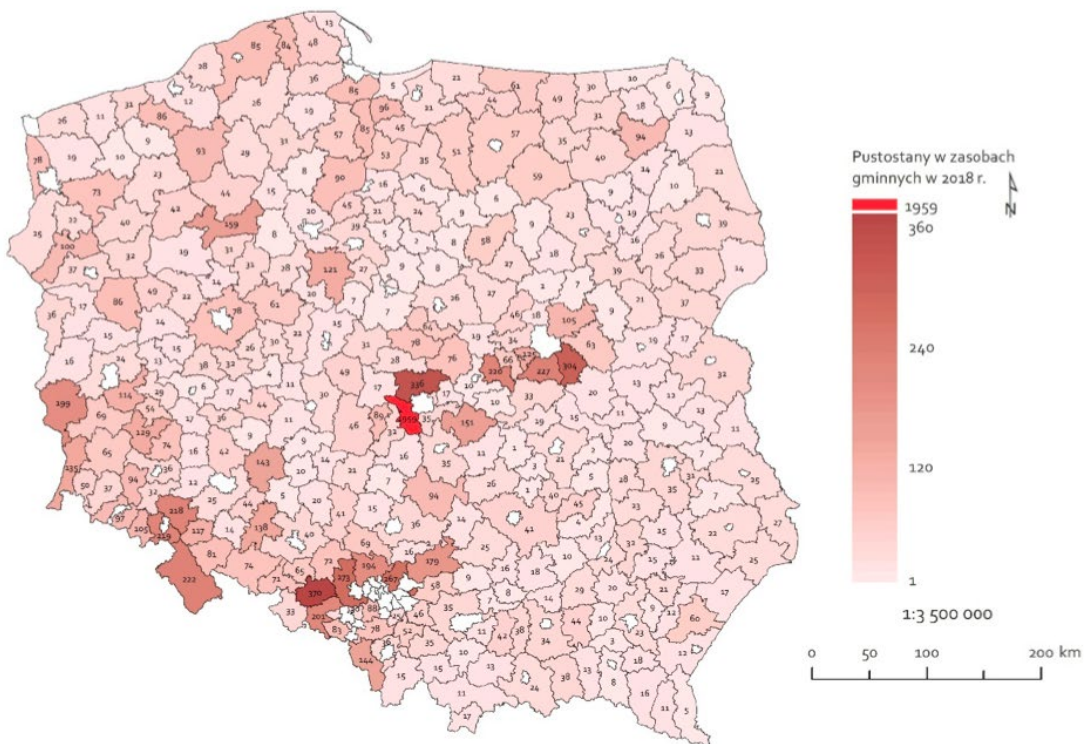


Figure 27. Variety of empty spaces by district (2018) / Source: own study on the Local Data Bank of the Central Statistical Office

In the cities with district status, a significant differentiation in the number of vacancies can also be observed. The table below (Table 19) presents changes in the number of vacant properties in cities with district status, where over five hundred (500) such units were recorded.

City	2003	2005	2007	2009	2013	2015	2016	2018
Warsaw	3623	3583	4655	5381	8017	8608	8931	9204
Lodz	2762	2501	3110	3077	5011	6247	6966	7552
Wroclaw	1720	409	1344	2283	2450	2386	2278	1984
Katowice	460	510	787	947	1338	1597	1823	1785
Bytom	1248	1167	1302	1200	1381	1470	1454	1740
Gdansk	118	100	225	402	968	1315	980	1171
Krakow	358	313	401	7	540	753	846	1170
Walbrzych	350	124	520	971	996	1304	968	1097
Bydgoszcz	171	142	218	682	640	863	958	1097
Szczecin	533	159	457	564	404	472	1275	876
Chorzow	0	354	193	167	159	379	380	836
Poznan	134	0	128	177	828	832	578	620
Bielsko-Biala	158	186	126	181	575	447	543	527
Torun	41	18	41	50	315	409	901	500

Table 19. Residential vacancies in cities with district status in 2018 / Source: Local Data Bank, GUS

Changes in the number of vacant spaces result from many factors. The increase in the number is most often the result of detailed inventories of the resources, followed by the decrease - the demolition of degraded resources and repairs undertaken in spaces that may still house residents. In many cities, especially when there are many vacant spaces, the problem grows with no clear chance of improvement.

The analysis of the empty spaces rate in urban, urban-rural and rural communities leads to the conclusion that it is primarily a problem in urban areas. In 2018, in total in the aforementioned groups of local government units, there were forty-one thousand, four hundred and eighty-seven (41,487 - Urban), four thousand, one hundred and thirty-six (4,136 - Urban-rural) and thirty-six (36 - rural) empty spaces. The degree of variation in the severity of the empty spaces problem for urban communities is best evidenced by the difference between the average (less than one hundred and fifty-nine (159) units) and the median (twenty-three (23) units). For comparison, in urban-rural communities, on average, there were seven (7) units, and in half of these areas there are no more than three (3) empty units.

A similar diagnosis of the severity of the problem of vacant spaces in municipal housing stocks can be found in the analysis of the NIK report of 2019: "The analysis of the data on the number of vacant spaces in municipal housing stocks clearly indicates that this phenomenon affects primarily larger cities like Zabrze, Radom, and Płock. In rural towns or smaller urban centres, if there are empty spaces at all, these are usually temporarily unoccupied properties, awaiting renovation and re-occupation. In larger urban centres, these are largely entire buildings awaiting demolition due to their technical condition or spaces which, due to their location, internal layout of the apartment, large area or living conditions (e.g. bathrooms outside the apartment) do not meet the expectations of people expecting to live in them. There are often pre-war buildings, sometimes inscribed on the list of monuments, which, according to the Supreme Audit Office, affects the costs of renovation and their adaptation to the current standards and expectations of future tenants".

A commentary on the findings of the Supreme Audit Office's research may be the conclusion of research conducted in cities as part of the IRMiR Urban Policy Observatory:

"The conducted research has shown that the vast majority of vacant spaces are in [municipal housing - editor's note] standard, not social, stocks, and highlighted the concentration of vacancies in larger cities and large towns, the same ones with high demand for standard and municipal housing. The low vacancy rate in the stock of social housing can be related to many years of support for the construction of social housing from the funds of Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego (BGK). In turn, the large scale of the problem with regard to the stock of standard housing is a derivative of negligence in the renovation policy".

Source: Muzioł-Węclawowicz A., Nowak K. (ed.), 2018, Social housing. Report on the condition of Polish cities, IRMiR Urban Policy Observatory, Institute of Cities and Regions Development, Warsaw, p. 24

7. Empty spaces and revitalization programs

For the purposes of the study, an analysis of the content of revitalization programs currently at play in Poland was carried out, which shows an incomplete and quite unintentional approach to the vacant space issue identified within this document. Most often, the problem of empty spaces is only mentioned as a deficit of the revitalization area, sometimes with references to residential properties, sometimes to commercial ones.

Full inventories of the rate of vacant properties in revitalization areas or the entire city are rare. An example is Szczecin, where both the number of empty commercial properties in the city (three hundred and sixty-nine (369)) and the total number of commercial properties in the towns own resources (two thousand and seventy-seven (2,077)) have been identified. In turn, in Wrocław, the inventory of empty commercial properties was limited to the revitalization area itself (approximately three hundred and ten (310), with the total number of commercial properties in the city being one thousand, eight hundred and six (1,806). The revitalization programs also include information about private buildings excluded from use, as well as projects involving the adaptation of a specific vacant space to new functions. In particular, in the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship, several completed projects of this type have been identified, which proves that towns and cities in this voivodeship are open to similar projects in the future.

A big problem is post-industrial real estate with unspecified legal status, abandoned in practice, as well as post-railroad real estate, which cannot be taken over from PKP S.A. according to the information contained in the programs. A striking observation is the spatial concentration of vacancies in specific cities. For example, in Łódź and Pabianice, most of the vacancies identified in the entire Łódź Province are located, and in the capital city of Warsaw - most vacancies identified in Mazovia.

In Łódź, according to estimated data, the number of vacancies on the borders of the Core of the Metropolitan Zone may include up to 4 500 buildings with housing reserves for residential purposes (approx. 1/5 is in the municipal stock) and approx. 200 completely abandoned and unused buildings (approx. 1/4 in the municipal resource). The total usable area of vacancies is approx. 4 million m², in addition, in the area of the Big City Zone, there are approx. 1,000 plots of land without development (urban "wastelands") with a total area of approx. 100 ha (almost 8% of the Metropolitan Zone).

In the case of Pabianice, the issues concerning the condition of buildings in the city centre is significant. Data on unoccupied housing within the towns and cities are collected regularly every two years, starting from 2013. In 2015, there was a significant increase in empty vacancy rates - by as much as 89% compared to 2013 (four hundred and six (406) in 2015 to 215 in 2013). The main reason was the inability to improve the condition of this development, including limited access to financing for said activities (p. 72 of the revitalisation program). The city's post-industrial heritage is also a specific feature of Pabianice. The complexes of the former post-industrial buildings (e.g. the complex of the former "Krusche iEnder" textile factory in the region of Grobelna Street, the partially revitalised complex of buildings of the former industrial empire of the Baruch family at Zamkowa / Lipowa Street, the complexes of industrial buildings at Piłsudskiego Street) used to be a testimony of the city's splendour.

Currently, some of them have been adapted to new functions, but many still require further adaptation to meet new needs.

Voivodeship	Number of local authorities where the number was indicated vacancy in PR	Number of empty spaces
Dolnoslaskie	3	3015
Kujawsko-Pomorskie	5	972
Lubelskie	4	31
Lubuskie	2	4
Lodzkie	6	4983
Malopolskie	4	41
Mazowieckie	5	9356
Opolskie	2	10
Podkarpackie	3	213
Podlaskie	2	29
Pomorskie	1	5
Slaskie	6	120
Swietokrzyskie	2	3
Warmińsko-Mazurskie	0	0
Wielkopolskie	6	97
Zachodniopomorskie	2	374

Table 20. Reporting vacant spaces in revitalization programs / Source: own study

The topic of vacant spaces in revitalization is most often taken in three contexts:

- Building substance degradation - as an illustration of crisis phenomena in the technical sphere,
- Poor condition of the economy in the area of revitalization, expressed in a large or increasing number of empty or out of use commercial properties,
- The problem of vacant spaces as places where people in the crisis of homelessness find temporary shelter.

The latter dimension of the analysis is usually related to the description of the phenomena of crime and a low sense of security in technically degraded city centres.

Detailed information on empty commercial spaces and post-industrial buildings is presented below, taken from the revitalization programs in three selected voivodeships, where the information is the most detailed (Lower Silesia Voivodeship, Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship and Lesser Poland voivodships).

Lower Silesia

In the revitalization program in Bystrzyca Kłodzka, the negative technical condition of historic real estates was mentioned among negative factors in the spatial and functional sphere. 40% of objects under conservation protection require large outlays, investments and repairs, and more than half of them (55%) are located in a degraded area. 34 closed buildings, not suitable for use and in need of renovation were indicated, including ten (10) in a degraded area, of which:

- One (1) building on Kłodzka Street, Międzyłęśna and in Lasówka,
- Two (2) buildings in Gorzanów and Nowy Waliszów,
- Four (4) buildings in Idzikowo.

In the program, the problem of vacant spaces is closely related to the decapitalization of the building substance. In Polkowice, the problem of vacant spaces has not been diagnosed, but the risk of its occurrence in the future due to unfavourable demographic situations has been indicated - "due to the advancing depopulation of the city, vacant spaces will begin to appear in the area, both in housing and as a result of reduced demand for goods and services (empty commercial lots)" (LPR pp. 12-13). In this context, revitalization was indicated as an important tool for reviving the city centre and also attracting inhabitants from rural areas. In the town of Leśna, abandoned post-industrial areas, mainly after Zakłady Przemysłu Jedwabniczego "Dolwis", were identified in the revitalization area:





Figure 28. Post-factory facilities in the Lešna commune / Source: Local Revitalization Program of the Lešna Commune for 2016-2023, pp. 30-32.

And also railroad owned areas:



Figure 29. Railroad buildings in the town of Lešna / Source: Local Revitalization Program of the town of Lešna for 2016-2023, p. 33.

Also in area B (Pobiedno) abandoned post-industrial buildings of the former "Fatma" Furniture Fabrics Factory were identified. Some of these buildings have not yet been completely degraded and have the potential for further adaptation, especially office buildings. Adaptation feasibility was not analysed in the content of this program.



Figure 30. Post-factory buildings in the town of Lešna, Pobiednia / Source: Local Revitalization Program of the Lešna Commune for 2016-2023, p. 59.

As part of the revitalization program in Kamienna Góra, an inventory of the area was partially carried out, which resulted in, for example, a photo of a degraded and deserted building on Młyńska street. There are more similar buildings in the town.



Figure 31. Building in Kamienna Góra / Source: Kamienna Góra Local Revitalization Program for the years 2016 - 2022, p. 97.

Also in area B (Pobiedno) abandoned post-industrial buildings of the former "Fatma" Furniture Fabrics Factory were identified. Some of these buildings have not yet been completely degraded and have the potential for further adaptation, especially office buildings. Adaptation feasibility was not analysed in the content of this program.

In Świeradów-Zdrój, the need to carry out renovations along with finding a new function for the existing building in conjunction with its modernization or demolition of the existing building, which due to structural conditions cannot be renovated, was identified.

In Wrocław, in the Local Revitalization Program for 2016-2018, a detailed analysis of the vacant spaces rate in the revitalization area was presented. It is worth citing its main fragments as a model of information to be used in other programs, the authors of which would like to take up the topic of vacancy:

"There are many commercial and service partners along the main streets, however, the number of commercial properties does not translate into the differentiation of their offer, hence the lack of adaptation to meet the needs of all residents. The municipal stock of commercial properties includes many items that are long-term vacancies - renting or selling is difficult due to their poor condition. This also applies to some spaces located in outbuildings. Locating business activities in facilities in the second line of buildings is appreciated and practiced by entrepreneurs, in Przedmieście Oławskie, however, most of such premises are occupied by service activities that have had their headquarters there for many years (e.g. glass services, repair plants, etc.), traffic related to new activities is limited" (p. 31).

"In Przedmieście Oławskie, there are a total of two hundred and sixty-one (261) communal service spaces, including approximately one hundred (100) vacant spaces with various purposes (rental, renovation, demolition) (as of 2016). The degree of structural degradation within the town's vacancy rate is significant, which results in difficulties in finding tenants. For some empty spaces, the continuity of the lease was deliberately suspended due to the planned renovations within the building". (p. 50)

"The remaining commercial properties serve as vacant spaces. There are rooms located on the ground floors or in the basement of buildings with an entrance from the street, but also in outbuildings in courtyard interiors or in stone houses with an entrance from the courtyard. Their status is dynamic, depending on the ongoing or renewed tender procedures for the lease of said premises. The vacant space rates vary, mostly in poor condition - many of them have been put out of use or have been demolished due to their poor structural condition. The vacant space rates are also distinguished by the type, usable area and previous use. These are both small built-in spaces with a small surface area, as well as free-standing outbuildings over 100 m². Larger service centres are less typical of Nadodrze - there are three grocery stores on the border of the area, two of which are independent buildings (but without separate parking spaces for customers). An important place on the economic map is the marketplace on Ptasia street, which has numerous customers at all times of the day. Nadodrze has very good accessibility and a variety of basic services. A characteristic feature of the estate is the presence of more and more units from the gastronomic sector and more niche services, including artisanal and artistic activities. Nevertheless, a large rotation of tenants in commercial/service units is observed, a noticeable problem is also the empty spaces located on many streets". (p. 67)

In the economic sphere, the revitalisation program in Wrocław analysed the level of rent for communal commercial properties (partially or fully) owned by the city of Wrocław (as of February 2016). The number of properties and the number of empty spaces among them were indicated:

- In Przedmieście Oławskie, two hundred and fifty (250) commercial properties were identified, amongst which, ninety-two (92) vacant spaces were identified (37% of the stock of units in the area),
- In Nadodrze – two hundred and sixty-three (263) commercial properties, including approximately sixty (60) vacant spaces (23% of the stock of units in the area),
- In Wrocław – One thousand, eight hundred and six (1,806) commercial properties, with no separate data on specific empty spaces located in the entire city.

The data is accompanied by a commentary on the significant share of vacant spaces among all communal commercial properties. According to the authors of the program, numerous spaces and the low standard of commercial/service units are the weaknesses of the revitalization area in Wrocław.

References to empty spaces also appear in the operational purposes and areas of intervention in the Wrocław program. It was planned to continue the programs that had brought positive effects (e.g. socio-economic revitalization of former trade routes, the Nadodrze website, creating conditions and incentives to locate preferred activities in Nadodrze, especially in the state of organizing tenders for artists, entrepreneurs and craftsmen).

Among the economic programs that are to support revitalization, the Wrocław Commune Program for supporting small and medium-sized entrepreneurs running a business in Wrocław was mentioned (Resolution No. XI / 210/03 of the Wrocław City Council on July 11, 2003). This program envisaged the management of real estate and commercial premises owned by the Municipality of Wrocław (privatization of properties, long-term lease or tenancy agreements with the application of the stable rent principle, development of empty spaces with a view to the continued development of trade and services). Also in relation to private activities, the need for renovation and development of vacant buildings was emphasized.

The Local Program for the Revitalization of the City of Jelenia Góra for the years 2015-2023 identified vacancies in which homeless people live as a problem in the area of revitalization. This is an example of taking the vacancy issue from a different perspective than as a symptom of technical degradation in the area of revitalization or the problem of the poor economic condition of the area.

In turn, the Local Revitalization Program for Łądek-Zdrój for 2016-2022 indicates that out of five hundred and forty (540) council flats and fifty-one (51) social flats (in 2013), fifteen (15) flats were uninhabited. One of the significant negative phenomena in the area of revitalization are the limited possibilities of financing the renovation and modernization of residential buildings by the town/city - rent arrears, a large stock of old and historic tenement houses, including empty spaces.

In a similar approach to the problem of empty spaces, the Local Program for the Revitalization of the Municipal Commune of Kowary for 2016-2023, where it was indicated that the town's resources in 2014 included fifty-three (53) social flats and several dozen empty spaces (their number is mobile due to evictions, relocations and renovations).

In the Municipal Revitalization Program for the Olszyna Commune for 2016-2020, the sub-areas of revitalization have been characterized in detail. Although no specific numbers have been presented, the photographic inventory shows numerous abandoned buildings, such as an old cinema, a decaying railway station building, and the grounds of the Olszyńskie Furniture Factories (which fell in 2008).



Rysunek 7: Budynek Urzędu Miejskiego (źródło: CDE Sp. z o.o.)



Rysunek 6: Budynek PKP (źródło: CDE Sp. z o.o.)



Rysunek 8: Budynek Olszyńskich Fabryk Mebli (źródło: CDE Sp. z o.o.)

Figure 32. Images from the GPR of the Olszyna commune / Source: Commune Revitalization Program for the Olszyna Commune for 2016-2020, p. 24.

Adaptation of these buildings would involve significant expenses, which cannot be afforded by the current owners or the condition of the building means that the inheritance procedures are indefinitely prolonged and there is no de facto owner. A significant portion of the historic residential buildings in Olszyna are also vacant:



Figure 33. Empty spaces of the Olszyna commune / Source: Commune Revitalization Program for the Olszyna Commune for 2016-2020, p. 25.

Similarly, in the second sub-area, Biedrzychowice, the entire Palace Complex in Biedrzychowice was indicated as vacant.



Figure 34. Palace complex in Biedrzychowice, town of Olszyna / Source: Commune Revitalization Program for the town of Olszyna for 2016-2020, p. 64.

In the Municipal Revitalization Program of the City of Wałbrzych for 2016-2025, the increasing number of empty spaces was indicated as one of the main spatial and urban challenges of the revitalization area. This is also confirmed in the vacant property inventory that we received from Wałbrzych as part of this study, where almost two thousand, four hundred (2,400) vacant buildings were listed. This applies to both residential buildings, but also to the maintenance and financing of cultural resources and facilities that were built during the economic boom of the city at the beginning of the 20th century, but are now vacant (palaces, mine facilities).

"This problem is important because these facilities often lost their original functions or do not have owners who could invest significant funds required for their renovation due to their condition and lack of use. An important element is also the issue of verification and updating of knowledge about the cultural resource in Wałbrzych - defined, among others, by the Municipal Register of Monuments and programs devoted to the protection of the city's heritage "(p. 16 of the Municipal Program ...). A problem on the border of the social and technical sphere is the "wild" occupation of vacant buildings, which, given the scale of empty, undeveloped housing, requires constant supervision. The process of demolishing degraded buildings has been ongoing since the beginning of the programs implementation and the number of buildings unsuitable for use is falling. However, the problem remains pressing.

Kuyavian-Pomeranian voivodship

In the Municipal Revitalization Program of the City of Bydgoszcz 2023+, a detailed inventory of municipal housing substance was carried out, for each analysis unit, showing buildings to be demolished and evicted with a total number of vacancies.

According to historical data in the revitalization program, the number of empty spaces in Bydgoszcz in the municipal stock increased from year to year.

City areas covered by the analysis	Scale of vacant property rates
Bocianowo - Śródmieście - Old Town	Five (5) buildings were evicted - at 3 Maja, Lipowa, Reja and Urocza Streets Four (4) buildings have been qualified for demolition on Bocianowo and Pomorska Streets, Rycerska, Żłkiewski At the end of 2015, there were six hundred and eighty-five (685) empty spaces.
Okole	Thirteen (13) buildings were evicted on Cieszkowskiego, Czarna Droga, Grunwaldzka, Jasna and Nadrzeczna Seven (7) have been qualified for demolition on Chetmińska and Czarna Droga, Grunwaldzka, Jasna, Łokietek and Nadrzeczna At the end of 2015, there were one hundred and seventy-six (176) empty spaces.
Wilczak-Jary	Three (3) buildings were evicted on Dolina and Nakielska Streets, One (1) building has been qualified for demolition on Chłodna street/ Nakielska At the end of 2015, there were fifty-eight (58) empty spaces.
Old Fordon	Four (4) buildings have been qualified for evacuation on: Fordońska Street and on the Vistula River. At the end of 2015, there were forty-three (43) empty spaces.
Cold Waters - Czersko Polskie	At the end of 2015, there were seven (7) empty spaces.

Table 21. Information on vacant spaces in the Bydgoszcz revitalization program / Source: own study based on the Municipal Revitalization Program of the City of Bydgoszcz 2023+, pp. 67-68.

Revitalization area	2013	2014	2015
Bocianowo - Śródmieście - Old Town, Okole, Wilczak-Jary w tym:	543	665	919
Stork-Śródmieście-Old Town: Okole:	381	478	685
Wilczak-Jary:	114 48	137 50	176 58
Old Town:	28	28	43
Cold Waters-Czersko Polskie:	13	14	7

Table 22. Number of empty spaces in the areas of revitalization of Bydgoszcz before action / Source: Municipal Revitalization Program for the City of Bydgoszcz 2023+, p. 68.

The most common reason for empty spaces in Bydgoszcz is the structural conditions of spaces, especially the poor condition of entire buildings. Other reasons include low utility values or administrative and legal issues.

In Toruń, the stalls in commercial spaces are clearly noticeable. In the revitalization program, the decline in trade in the Old Town is noted as an economic problem. "Trade flourished until there were no shopping centres in the streets. Many shops operated widely, including the most famous chain stores, which currently operate in almost every shopping centre in Poland. In recent years, the character of the Old Town has changed, in line with the typical trends in city centres throughout the country. More shops were liquidated, the offer of which was not able to attract residents to the Old Town. The abandoned spaces resulted in the emergence of a large number of vacant properties awaiting subsequent tenants. In recent years, a noticeable change in the area of the Old Town has been the displacement of the commercial function in favour of gastronomy. The new traffic organization introduced modifications to the interests of pedestrians and entrepreneurs by creating parking spaces for supplies, couriers and suppliers, electric cars, rickshaws and subscription holders" (p. 86). No detailed analysis of the scale of the occurrence of empty units has been carried out, which proves the lesser importance of this problem compared to the economic importance of empty commercial spaces.

Similarly, the significance of unused commercial properties was analysed in the Włocławek program.

"Streets with an increased concentration of empty commercial premises, ie 3 Maja, Brzeska, Cyganka, Królewiecka, Łęgska, Przechodnia, Srebrna, Tumska, Stary Rynek, Zapiecek and Żabia, are marked in the table in bold.

From the observed state it can be concluded that in the marked area the market does not respond with interest to the existing supply of commercial properties, so the degree of entrepreneurship in the reported area is low (probably in response to the objectively difficult conditions of running a business and weak demand).

The situation is similar with real estate and properties, which in the discussed area are vacant and unused, but are not put up for rent, probably due to a very poor condition. A large number of such facilities in a given area can be interpreted as the market's lack of readiness to spend on their renovation in order to start a business in them. Therefore, it is a premise to state the limited attractiveness of the area for business activity. The accumulation of services typical of degraded areas is particularly noticeable in the central part, i.e. at 3 Maja, Brzeska, Królewiecka, Piekarska, Srebrna, Zapiecek, Zduńska and Żabia streets, are marked in bold in the table.

Nowadays, wealthier societies treat city centres almost exclusively as spaces for relaxation, recreation and entertainment. However, the centre of Włocławek does not attract residents only with its commercial and service offers, but also with the lack of an offer to spend time in the centre that could keep the inhabitants. It seems that at present the functions of the meeting place for residents and trade have been taken over by the Wzorcownia shopping and entertainment centre located in the vicinity of the city centre. With its appearance, most of the clothing stores in downtown collapsed".

In Chełmno, the building of Primary School No. 1 in Aleja 3 Maja 5, and in a poor condition, was indicated as a vacant building that could be adapted to social activities. In an in-depth analysis of negative phenomena in the spatial and functional sphere, a lot of attention was paid to this building:

"The building in Aleja 3 Maja 5 was the former building of Primary School No. 1, built in the first half of the 19th century according to the design of the eminent Prussian architect Karol Fryderyk Schinkel. Originally this building served as a cadet school, and after regaining independence it was used for the needs of Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland (Cadet Corps No. 2, then 66th Kashubian Infantry Regiment then Marshal Józef Piłsudski). It passed into the hands of the local government in the late 90s during the last century.

The building is on a rectangular plot with an avant-corps projecting from the side of the courtyard, three-storeys and with a non-usable attic, a full basement with a mansard roof covered with a tiled roof. Constructed in traditional brick. Mixed ceilings - above the basement, the so-called "Prussian Cope", the remaining inter-storey ones in wooden construction, wooden purlin and tongue roof truss with a clock tower. The high architectural rank of the building is confirmed by the entry in the commune the records of monuments under the item 71 (Program for the care of monuments for the city of Chełmno for 2013-2016 Annex to the resolution No. XLVI / 299/2014 of the Chełmno City Council of 27 May 2014)

Currently, since the entry into force of the provisions of the Education Law (Journal of Laws of 2017, item 60), the seat of Primary School No. 1 has been moved to 11 T. Kościuszki Street. The building is not used, and it is currently vacant.

The building in question has a usable area of 1,777.72 m² and a cubature of 5,969.50 m³ and is located on plot no. 486/1 within the registration area no. 1. Visible dampness in the walls, salinity on the basement walls, local plaster detachments, including in the plinth part require intervention, - local cracks in the external walls within the window lintels, - poor structural condition of the window joinery (windows in the attic), - poor technical condition of the cover roof with the necessary replacement of the gutter with sheet metal flashing, - poor structural condition of the external fence with numerous cracks and losses, - heat source - gas boiler with identified wear.

As part of the revitalization activities, it is planned to adapt the ground floor and the first floor of the building in order to house: The Social Integration Club, the Chełmno Entrepreneurship Support Point, the Local Action Group "Chełmno LAG" and the Social Action Incubator. In total, 967.65 m² of space is planned for the aforementioned activities.

The district of the City of Chełmno decided to revitalize the degraded urban space and allocate a part of the building for the purpose of developing social activity. At the same time, raising the aesthetics of the Old Town area to contribute to improving the quality of life of the residents and increasing their social activity. The degraded facility will support activities in the field of reducing unfavourable social phenomena like unemployment, economic dependence and the use of social assistance. There are no plans to use the area of the revitalized facility commercially, which could directly lead to gentrification of the area".

Renovation of the described building is in preparation. Resolution No. XXXI / 210/2021 of the Chetmno City Council of January 13, 2020 on the adoption of the Commune Program for the Care of Monuments of the Chetmno Commune for the years 2021-2024 provides for the revalorization of the facility without specific information about the planned activities.

A similar situation was described in the Municipal Revitalization Program of the City and District of Górzno for 2016-2023. A location was needed that would provide housing facilities for the Housewives' Association, the Senior Club, non-governmental organizations and other informal groups that work to stimulate society. Since there was no such space, the transformation of the vacant building (the building of the old gym on Matejki street) for the purposes of the Creative Activities Centre was considered. "After analysing the condition of the building, which requires a thorough renovation, and during the consultation meeting held on October 3, 2017 at GOK Górzno, the participants identified the building of the Volunteer Fire Department at Floriana Street as a place for the Creative Activities Centre" (p. 62).



Figure 35. Górzno, building designated for the Creative Activities Centre / Source: The Municipal Revitalization Program of the City and Commune of Górzno for the years 2016 - 2023, p. 62.

In the second sub-area, Miesiączków, there are three (3) buildings whose structural condition limits or prevents their use (2.34% of the total number of buildings in the village administration), and in the third (Szczutów) – two (2) such buildings (2.86% of the total number of buildings in the village administration). In the town and commune of Górzno, 3.88% of buildings are empty.

The possibility of using the former steam boiler plants in the district of Tuchola was explored in a similar way. In the Local Revitalization Program for the Tuchola district for 2016-2023, unused steam boiler plants were identified in two villages (Mały Mędromierz and Raciąż), which had plans for adaptation for the integration of older people.

The former steam boiler plants in Mały Mędromierz from 1960, with an area of 126.54 m², or 0.1656 ha has been owned by the district since 2006, when it was taken over from the Agricultural Property Agency of the State Treasury.

The former steam boiler plant in the village of Wysoka in the area of the Raciąż district, (year of construction unknown), with an area of 108.32 m², or 0.1137 ha. It has been in the districts resources since 2014, when it was taken over from the State Treasury's Agricultural Property Agency. Heat production takes place in individual houses and is not used.



Figure 36. former steam boiler plants in the Tuchola district / Source: Local Revitalization Program for the Tuchola District for 2016-2023, pp. 29-32.

In both cases, heat production takes place in individual houses and the buildings are therefore not used for their original purpose and remain unused. Both can be adapted to integration and activation functions with considerable expenditure (maintenance of the flat roof and replacement of the roofing, chimney, window and door joinery, façade renovation, urgent replacement of gutters and downspouts and lighting). In both places there are planned undertakings called "Scouting a cottage for starks, or creating a retirement home", which were implemented.

In Janikowo, when delineating the areas of revitalization, the so-called infrastructure indicator was used (the number of buildings, structures constituting of public utility infrastructure owned by the district, the structural condition of which limits or prevents their use in relation to the total of these spaces in a given area (an index reflecting the state of communal infrastructure in the district)). In the first analysed unit, three (3) out of seven (7) such buildings were identified, and in the entire district, as many as fifteen (15) out of eighty-four (84) public buildings cannot be used, but it is not possible to find information whether these buildings are out of use or not. In Brodnica, when delineating the area of revitalization, the above-mentioned, among others, like the infrastructure indicator. Despite the fact that over 75% of buildings were classified in this category, the existence of vacant spaces was not found.

In Janowiec Wielkopolski, within Osiedle III, degraded post-industrial areas, like manoeuvring yards, loading yards, communication service areas, railway station buildings, station equipment, loading ramps, warehouse and storage facilities, which have lost their original function and are currently not used, have been identified. One of the important places that are currently degraded in this area is the Water Tower - a former railway facility for rail traffic, which since 2011 has been the property of the Janowiec Wielkopolski district together with the adjacent area. The facility is located at Powstańców Wielkopolskich street, its building area is 54 m²; the total area of 80 m², and with a cubic capacity of 620 m³, the plot on which the space is located has an area of 0.1550 ha. At present, it is heavily degraded. The roof is destroyed, and the windows and doors are bricked up to prevent further damage to the building. The building also lacks any installations. The area around the building is undeveloped. The water tower without comprehensive renovation and reconstruction, together with the development of the adjacent area, is not suitable for use and poses a threat to the immediate surroundings" (Local Revitalization Program for the Janowiec Wielkopolski Commune for 2016-2023, p. 19).

Post-industrial areas have also been indicated as empty spaces by the Izbica Kujawska municipality (Local Revitalization Program for the Izbica Kujawska district for 2017-2023). These are buildings of the former state-owned farms located at Narutowicza street and the building of the former wicker shop located at 3 Maja 1.



Figure 37. Buildings of the former state-owned farms, Izbica Kujawska / Source: Local Revitalization Program for the Izbica Kujawska district for 2017-2023, p. 52 (photo: E. Sulczyńska).



Figure 38. Buildings of the former wicker factory, Izbica Kujawska / Source: Local Revitalization Program for the Izbica Kujawska district for 2017-2023, p. 53 (photo: E. Sulczyńska).

The building of the former wicker house is described in detail in the program. It was established in the 1980s and belonged to GS. Initially, it served as a warehouse, and after being taken over by the district, the warehouse was used sporadically (in 2012-2013, an agricultural store, later a light tools warehouse for public works employees employed by the City Hall in Izbica Kujawska). Currently, it is not in use due to its poor technical condition. Adaptation to new social functions was considered, e.g. a centre for socio-economic activity and providing space for non-governmental organizations. The Public Library also found its new home in the building, as its current seat does not allow for the development of its activities. An additional outcome would be to "free up" the space, which would allow it to be used for other social purposes, namely - due to the fact that it is adjacent to the current kindergarten - it would be possible to expand the facility and create another department. An additional factor supporting the adaptation of this building is its location on one of the main streets of the city, in the vicinity of the Municipal Office, which, according to the opinions of the inhabitants, is a significant factor reducing the attractiveness of the city.

In the rural part of the district of Izbica Kujawska, there are two other vacant buildings. In the village of Błenna, a building on the former dairy in private ownership, and in the village of Helenowo, an abandoned elementary school building. The building is part of the manor and palace complex, in which the school operated until August 2016. Currently there are plans to convert the building into a care home. It was built in 1929 (the records also record 1947 as a period of modernization / reconstruction) as a brick, detached, one-story building with an attic and basement.

Similarly, in the Mchówek district there is a park and manor complex previously used for educational purposes, entered in the register of monuments, but there are no investments planned there for financial reasons. Therefore, this unit was not described in the program.

In Gniewkowo, the existing empty space left in the park after the Summer Bar, the city authorities planned to dismantle and erect a much larger building in its place, which would serve as an Intergenerational Integration Centre with adapted disabled toilets (with access inside and outside the building), common rooms with a kitchenette and a hall adapted for training functions, as well as two office spaces (serving specialists in the fields of geriatrics, psychology, etc. and senior care organizations conducting regular meetings for seniors using the facility). In the present vision of the park, there is no question of a building in the place of the existing one, so demolition is planned, which is justified by the technical condition of the existing building. 60



Figure 39. Former school building, Szczkowo, Izbica Kujawska / Source: Local Revitalization Program for the district of Izbica Kujawska for 2017-2023, p. 63 (photo: E. Sulczyńska).



Figure 40. Former Summer Bar, Gniewkowo / Source: Local Revitalization Program of the Gniewkowo district for the years 2016-2023, p. 19.

In Golub-Dobrzyn, historic buildings of significant importance were identified as vacant (House Under the Hood and the building at 2 Brodnicka Street). The House under the Hood, next to the Teutonic Castle, is a symbol of the city, as well as the abandoned House of the Scout. During the public consultations, many residents emphasized that every effort should be made to make the place a centre of social activity. Buildings, in order to serve the residents again, require conservation and restoration works, thermal modernization, replacement of utilities, roof, woodwork and adaptation to the needs of the disabled.

In Solec Kujawski, the analysis of the economic sphere drew attention to numerous empty shop windows in the Staromiejskie Centrum, which testify to the areas unattractiveness. Residential buildings were also inventoried, and photo documentation was presented in the program.

Ilustracja 10. Obszar rewitalizacji, budynek przy ul. Bydgoskiej 2, działka nr 484/2 - zły stan w 7 na 8 kryteriach głównych



Źródło: zasoby archiwalne UMIG Solec Kujawski

Ilustracja 11. Obszar rewitalizacji, budynek przy ul. Bydgoskiej 2, działka nr 410/1 - zły stan w 8 na 8 kryteriach głównych



Źródło: zasoby archiwalne UMIG Solec Kujawski

Ilustracja 12. Obszar rewitalizacji, budynek przy ul. Bydgoskiej 13, działka nr 452/2 - zły stan w 5 na 8 kryteriach głównych



Źródło: zasoby archiwalne UMIG Solec Kujawski

Ilustracja 13. Obszar rewitalizacji, budynek przy ul. Bydgoskiej 14, działka nr 463 - zły stan w 7 na 8 kryteriach głównych



Źródło: zasoby archiwalne UMIG Solec Kujawski

Ilustracja 16. Obszar rewitalizacji, budynek przy ul. 23 stycznia 15, działka nr 723/1 - zły stan w 5 na 8 kryteriach głównych



Źródło: zasoby archiwalne UMIG Solec Kujawski

Ilustracja 17. Obszar rewitalizacji, budynek przy ul. Toruńskiej 2, działka nr 702 - zły stan w 7 na 8 kryteriach głównych



Źródło: zasoby archiwalne UMIG Solec Kujawski

Ilustracja 18. Obszar rewitalizacji, budynek przy ul. Toruńskiej 16, działka nr 696 - zły stan w 6 na 8 kryteriach głównych



Źródło: zasoby archiwalne UMIG Solec Kujawski

The decaying building at 4 John Paul II Square was also indicated, which, due to its location, was of key importance for the success of the revitalization process.

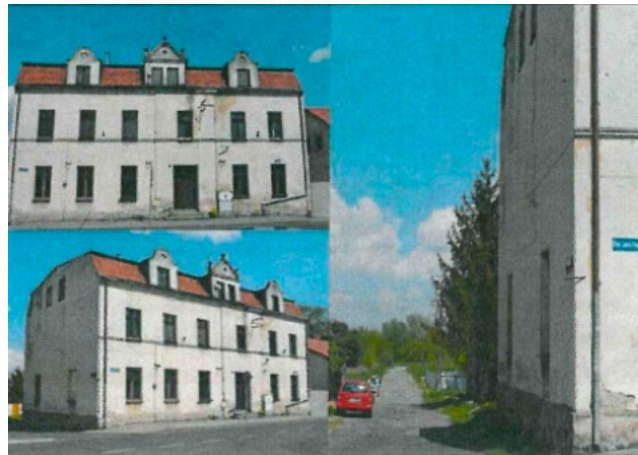


Figure 42. Solec Kujawski, building at Pl. John Paul II / Source: Commune Program for the Revitalization of the City and District of Solec Kujawski for the years 2016-2023, p. 58.

This project was carried out and consisted of the reconstruction and renovation of the attic of building No. 4 at Plaza John Paul II in Solec Kujawski in order to develop it into three sheltered apartments. The facility has introduced elements that adapt the apartments to the needs of elderly, dependent or disabled people. The project contributed to increase the access of the region's inhabitants to social services, which are an important element of counteracting poverty and social exclusion. As a result of the investment, a new infrastructure was created with a total usable area of 178.10 m², in which there are 3 single-person apartments (104.70 m²), as well as common rooms and communication space. The project was implemented under the Regional Operational Program of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship for the years 2014-2020, Measure 6.1 Investments in health and social infrastructure, Sub-measure 6.1.2 Investments in social infrastructure, Scheme: Investments in the infrastructure of sheltered housing (project value is PLN 847,271.43, of which EU funding was PLN 505,566.85).

In the Municipal Revitalization Program of the Barcin District for the years 2016-2023 in the Piechcin area empty spaces were indicated - courtyard buildings on Dworcowa Street (these areas are owned by PKP S. A.). The areas indicated do not have plans for future development because they are owned by PKP and mining companies. The owners of these areas are not interested in transformation of the spaces.



Figure 43. Railroad buildings, Piechcin, Barcin district / Source: The Municipal Revitalization Program of the Barcin district for 2016-2023, p. 63.

In the Szubin district, an empty space was indicated, the restoration of which was described by the residents as urgent. The building at 15 Winnica Street was the former Dom Harcerza, until December 2015, when there was a community centre for children. Due to the poor technical condition, the building was decommissioned, and the classes were moved to the school. The renovation was necessary and was carried out in 2019.

Similarly, according to Więcbork, where an empty space (outbuilding) was also indicated in the revitalization program, the building had already been renovated: "The district of Więcbork owns plots of land marked with geodetic numbers 13/3 and 12/3 in Więcbork 3 district, with a total area of 0.2163 ha, which form a degraded area within the city centre. This degraded area has an outbuilding at 22 Mickiewicza Street, which requires a general renovation and change of function, along with adjacent undeveloped and unused land in the city centre. The building is located on a plot marked with the geodetic number 13/3, district Więcbork 3. According to the data of the Powiat Starosty in Sępólno Krajeński included in the building file - the building consists of two buildings marked with registration numbers 118 and 119, built in 1920, with a total building area of 296 m². It is a two-story building without a basement. The walls were made of small-size brick on mortar. The building was erected directly on the foundation slopes using traditional technology. Currently, the property is a vacant building, only partially used as a warehouse for adding materials for the administrator of communal roads - road signs, nameplates, Christmas street lighting. One room with an area of 21.56 m² is intended as a social room for economic workers of the Municipal Office in Więcbork. The technical degradation of the building in question has been ongoing throughout the years. The roof of the building is covered with roofing felt. The cover is worn out and has wrinkles. The roof truss is not preserved. Only part of the building is plastered. There are visible defects in joints between bricks. The window and door joinery is leaky. There are gaps in the glazing. The building is not heated. The damage indicates that the worn-out elements of the building have not been renovated or preserved for many years. The building was supposed to be developed into a self-help club for the inhabitants of the Więcbork district. In order to adapt the building to the club's needs, an extension and reconstruction is necessary. As a result of a technical appraisal of the condition of the structure and building elements, it was reported that the building is currently constructed as an open shell and is suitable for the planned investment. The usable area of the building, in accordance with the constructions design, after the planned investment is completed, will total 353.68 m². At the same time, as a result of the investment, the building will be adapted to the needs of disabled and elderly people by eliminating architectural barriers. It is estimated that after the completion of the investment, about 400 people will use the building". Pp. 34-35



Figure 44. Building to be converted in Więcbork commune / Source: Local Revitalization Program of the Więcbork Commune for 2017-2023, p. 35 (photo: Barbara Szmidt).



"Przebudowa, rozbudowa oraz zmiana sposobu użytkowania budynku gospodarczego na klub samopomocy dla mieszkańców gminy Więcbork oraz pomieszczenia socjalne wraz z budową parkingu"

Figure 45. Visualization of the reconstruction of the building in the Więcbork district / Source: <https://wiecbork.pl/40989/> [27/05/2021].

"The District of Więcbork reported that on July 31, 2018, the final acceptance of construction works on the outbuilding and its adaptation into a self-help club were carried out. The works also included the renovation of social rooms and the construction of a car park. Implementation of the investment entitled "Reconstruction, expansion and change of the use of the farm building into a self-help club for residents of the Więcbork district and social rooms along with the construction of a car park" was possible thanks to funds obtained from the European Union under the Regional Operational Program of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship for 2014-2020, Priority Axis 6 Solidarity society and competitive staff, Measure 6.1. Investments in health and social infrastructure, Sub-measure 6.1.2. Investments in the social infrastructure of the Regional Operational Program of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship for 2014 - 2020.

The main goal of the project is to increase access to social services in the district, with the inclusion of care home places for the elderly and for those with disabilities, creating places of active leisure for people in later years, poor health or socially excluded individuals.

In Nakło nad Notecią, in the revitalization area, the buildings excluded from use are located on Wodna street and Gimnazjalna Street. On Wodna street there is a detached building that can be converted into a social therapy day room. It used to be a residential unit, but by the end of 2016 the tenants had vacated the building.



Figure 46. The building at 7 Wodna Street, Nakło nad Notecią / Source: Local Revitalization Program for the Town and district of Nakło nad Notecią for the years 2016 - 2023, p. 31.



Figure 47. The building at 10 Gimnazjalna Street, Nakło nad Notecią / Source: Local Program for the Revitalization of the Town and district of Nakło nad Notecią for the years 2016 - 2023, p. 33.

There is one more building that meets the criteria of degraded space - the building at 10 Gimnazjalna Street. It is now a vacant building owned by the district. The building requires modernization, including the reconstruction of the entire functional layout of the building, replacement of the electrical installation, adaptation to the required standards of sanitary facilities and reconstruction of the water and sewage network, along with thermal modernization.



Figure 47. The building at 10 Gimnazjalna Street, Nakło nad Notecią / Source: Local Program for the Revitalization of the Town and district of Nakło nad Notecią for the years 2016 - 2023, p. 33.

Lesser Poland Voivodeship

In the Nowy Sącz revitalization program, incomplete mentions of vacant buildings can be found - pages 15, 22, 25, 26. However, it was not specified what type of buildings they were.

There are vacant vacancies in the area of the Stare Miasto housing estate - their area in 2015 amounted to 278.09 m², which means an almost 2.5-fold increase compared to 2011.

This proves the progressive degradation of this area. The presence of empty spaces negatively affects the quality of public spaces, while negative environmental indicators directly translate into a low quality of life for residents.

Some of the vacancies in the district include:

- Buildings previously occupied by the Municipal Police Headquarters on Dunajewskiego Street and Swedish Street,
- Tenement house on P. Skargi Street,
- Tenement house on Pijarska Street previously occupied by the Tax Office,
- Buildings previously used by the Fire Department on Grybowska Street,
- Two vacant buildings next to the cemetery.

In the Rabki-Zdrój revitalization program, a large number of empty spaces with unregulated ownership status was considered a key negative occurrence during the analysis carried out in the program (p. 54). Numerous empty spaces, located, among others in the area of Orkana Street were believed to spoil the image of the city (p. 56).



Figure 48. Empty spaces on Orkana street, Rabka Zdrój street / Source: Pro Regio Consulting

In Kęty, the presence of empty spaces was associated with a reduced sense of security for the inhabitants (the presence of vacant, undeveloped spaces and status favours violations on the regulations of alcohol consumption in public places and property destruction) and the deterioration of the image of the sub-area (p. 82). Similarly in Andrychów, where empty spaces were indicated as one of the areas affecting the security of residents in the revitalization area (e.g. as a result of the accumulation of homeless people in these areas (pp. 49-51) and in Grzybowo, where the growing number of empty spaces was identified as one of the causes of social problems in the area of revitalization area of the Śródmieście Sub-Area (p. 18).

In Ryglice, the presence of empty spaces in the Lubcza-Centrum sub-area was one of the reasons why it was chosen for revitalisation (p. 46). One of the empty spaces is the building once used as a shelter run by nuns – the historic, unused, decaying, threatening space spoils the image of the centre. "The facility was expanded many times, and for many years it served many different functions important for the local community. For several years now, mostly abandoned and falling into disrepair, not only does it spoil the image of the town but is also a visible sign of the crisis that is affecting the town. It is also - due to the fact that it is a deserted space and unattended by anyone - a dangerous place where various kinds of pathological phenomena occur". (p. 47).

In Krzeszowice, the presence of vacant buildings was identified as one of the main problems related to the spatial and functional sphere (p. 13). Similarly, in Sulkowice, where degraded housing, public utility and commercial infrastructure, incl. empty spaces were identified as the tired side of the revitalization sub-area" (p. 107). The problem of empty spaces was noticed in a similar way in Szczawnica during the analysis of the negative aspects of Sub-area 4 - Szczawnica Wyżna, Sopotnicka street area - Lots of wooden buildings, often in poor technical condition, vacant spaces (p. 61 In the lot in Sub-Area III, the presence of vacant and uninhabited premises included in the municipal property was identified as one of the main problems: Mickiewicz Park - the entire building, and at 57 Dembowski Street - two uninhabited premises and the entire ground floor remained after the liquidation of health clinic. II, in which the presence of empty spaces was also found.

A similar problem concerns Sub-Area II, where the presence of vacant properties was also found in which an increasingly long period of undeveloped space leads to an increase in the disproportions between the various parts of the city.

In Biecz, during an analysis of potential threats existing in the city, the document indicated the existence of several vacant buildings, incl. old school in Binarowa. The historic building of the former school, erected in 1903, has been unused for 5 years - the building has a usable area of 495 m², and due to its poor structural condition, it has a very high demand for heating energy, which in its present state makes it practically impossible to use (p. 17).



Figure 49. The building after the orphanage in Ryglice / Source: Peridea



Figure 50. Old school in Binarowa, Biecz District / Source: Biecz District GPR for 2016-2023

The revitalization program of Chrzanów indicated a significant share of empty spaces in the total number of municipal apartments - in 2013, nearly 8% of apartments remained unoccupied (p. 118).

In Tarnów, a large number of empty spaces was indicated by the inhabitants during the risk assessment - more than half of those asked considered the presence of empty spaces a significant or very important problem (p. 98). The document commented on it in the following way: "due to the problem with the ownership structure of tenement houses, there is a lot of vacant and unused space in the area of revitalization" (p. 116). The program presents the solution to the empty spaces problem suggested by the residents. It was the idea of renting said properties on preferential terms as an incentive to start new activities for young people, to encourage the population of the city centre. The participants decided that it is worth considering employing one person (manager), whose task would be to reasonably rent spaces and coordinate the process of revitalizing the space so as to stimulate the economic zone of the Market Square". (p. 116)

The program presents the solution to the vacancy problem suggested by the resident in.

It was "the idea of renting premises on preferential terms as an incentive to start new ones activities and for young people to encourage the population of the city center. Participants found that it is worth considering employing one person (manager) whose task would be dealing with rational renting of premises and coordination of the process of revitalizing the space, so as to stimulate the economic zone of the Market Square" (p. 116).

In Skalka, the presence of empty spaces was found in the sub-areas: Miasto Skata-Centrum and Lamprey. These are buildings in danger of collapsing, private homes in a state of decay whose owners have died, and their descendants are not interested in renovating or selling the property. It should be remembered that these properties may generate social problems (e.g. attracting people who consume alcohol illegally). Additionally, they constitute an untapped potential for the district and its inhabitants (p. 22). The problem was presented in a similar way to that of the Nowy Targ revitalization program. In the Centre area 1, the condition of the infrastructure is highly varied, while the key problem is the level of visible degradation found within the infrastructure. These places are the subject of frequent police interventions and concentrations of various types of social problems (p. 97).

The document indicated three revitalization projects aimed at solving the problem of empty spaces within the city:

1) Comprehensive revitalization of the area of the Old Hospital through construction and demolition works along with the overall development of the area for the needs of the Podhale State Higher Vocational School and the residents of Nowy Targ (p. 131). Some of the buildings were demolished in 2019, on August 18, 2021, the site was taken over by the demolition contractor of the last, largest building of the Old Hospital, and some of the historic foundations are to be preserved. The tender for the construction of a new building is to be announced by the university in 2021 (**24**).

2) Reconstruction of the road between MOK and the Buy & Fly Gallery (p. 137). The building of the cultural centre was rebuilt along with the entire adjacent area (**25**), the reopening of the MOK is planned for autumn 2021.

3) Reconstruction of Curve Street (p. 139). As a result of the works carried out in 2021, the surface was changed, the city heating pipeline was led to the seat of the Office and two schools, connecting 50 new recipients in total (**26**). There is no information about changes in housing vacancy.

In the Brzeszcze district, in the area of revitalization, a high number of empty spaces were found. Their presence and distribution were also analysed in the context of using their economic potential for business development. The scale of this problem is largest in the areas of Brzeszcze and Jawiszowice (pp. 68-70). In Rzepiennik Strzyżewski, there are empty spaces in the centre of the town. There are buildings of the former cooperative that require renovation and change of functions, preferably as facilities in which economic activity can be conducted, especially those associated with town centres, e.g. services, gastronomy (p. 57).



Figure 51. Buildings of the former cooperative, Rzepiennik Strzyżewski / Source: Pro Regio Consulting

24 Informacje o pracach z prasy lokalnej; <https://zakopane.wyborcza.pl/zakopane/7,179294,27468908,nowy-targ-stary-szpital-zostanie-wyburzony-w-jego-miejsce.html>

25 Informacje ze strony miasta <https://zakopane.wyborcza.pl/zakopane/7,179294,27468908,nowy-targ-stary-szpital-zostanie-wyburzony-w-jego-miejsce.html>

26 Portal miasta <https://www.nowytarg.pl/news.php?cod=10461>

27 Informacje ze strony miasta <https://www.gorlice.pl/pl/411/9537/w-%E2%80%99Esokole%E2%80%99D-praca-wre-.html>

Although no specific data on the number of empty spaces was given in the revitalization program of the Bukowno district, analysis of the needs identified in public consultations was. Among the proposals there was a proposal to develop a former school building "na Skatka" - to create a cultural centre or a meeting place. As we read further, the facility, located near the city centre, could be used to provide care for able bodied elderly individuals (pp. 16, 19). The document also indicated the need to develop the conversion of the former school at Wiejska Street into a meeting and cultural centre, which means that this building is not used and does not fulfil its function. The two-storey building located in the central part of the district is currently in a poor condition. It can be adapted to the needs of cultural activities (pp. 22-23).

Similarly, the document of the Gorlice district does not contain precise figures on empty spaces, but their presence is evidenced by the inclusion of such facilities as the former seat of the Sokół Gymnastic Society in revitalization projects. One of them, called the "Old Town" area - the local scientific, cultural, sports and recreational centre, along with the reconstruction of local roads and technical infrastructure in Gorlice and modernization of the abandoned Sokota building (vacant). Renovation works started a year ago and are continued in order to restore this historic place to its former splendour and functionality (pp. 89-92). (27)

In the Proszowic program, there is no precise data on empty spaces, but there are unused facilities in the district which could perform new functions after modernization like former primary school buildings. The facility is not used, and due to repeated hooliganism, it has fallen into ruin. As a result of revitalization activities, the building could play a recreational role for local youth. The district has experience relating to the adaptation of unused buildings to new purposes (see the case study of Caritas activities of the Kielce Diocese).

In Rytro, the analysed document indicates a large number of older buildings, some of which are in a poor condition. As an example of an empty spaces, there is the unused area at the railway station that is being shut down (p. 41).



Figure 52. The building of the former railway station, Rytro / Source: GPR for the District of Rytro for the years 2016-2023



Figure 53. Building of the former school in Dąbrówka, Pleśna district /Source: GPR for the Pleśna district for 2016-2023

In the case of the Plešna district there is a risk of rising empty spaces, e.g. in the case of the former school building - the facility is currently used to a very limited extent, which poses a risk of rapid and progressive decapitalisation of the facility (p. 44).

There are also empty spaces in the former Relax Centre. In the 1970s, it was used as a meeting and resting place for local residents, now it is a meeting place for young people consuming alcohol and hooligans. The space encourages pathological behaviour, which reduces the sense of safety for the local residents.



Figure 54. Relax Centre, Plešna district / Source: GPR for the Plešna district for 2016-2023

Similarly, in Radgoszcz, where the document does not indicate the presence of empty spaces, but there is a risk of their occurrence in the future, as the condition of some buildings and public spaces in the centre of the town are subject to progressive structural degradation. To prevent this from happening, measures of thermal modernization and adaptation to fulfil original or new functions can take place (pp. 56-57).

These include the following space: the building of the former Cooperative in Radgoszcz



Figure 55. Building of the former cooperative in Radgoszcz / Source: Commune Office in Radgoszcz



Figure 56. The building of the primary school in Małec, Radgoszcz district / Source: Commune Office in Radgoszcz

Building of the Volunteer Fire Department in Matec



Figure 57. The building of the Volunteer Fire Department in Matec, Radgoszcz district / Source: Commune Office in Radgoszcz

Many buildings, in poor conditions, were indicated in the revitalization program in Triąż. An example is the Popielów Palace Complex in Ściborzyce and the Jordan spring. After the war, the palace and adjacent areas were taken over by the State Treasury. Currently, the facility is in a terrible condition. After the fire in the 1970s, the ceilings collapsed. Numerous alterations and adaptations have disturbed the original architectural concept (pp. 49-50).



Figure 58. The Popielów Palace Complex in Ściborzyce / Source: www.dnidziedzictwa.pl

In the Charsznica commune, in the revitalization area, there are many historic buildings which, after modernization and re-adaptation, could be used for social and economic purposes:

- Church of Our Lady of the Rosary (brick; 1932-33),
- School building on 14 Szkolna Street. Brick school; 1928-1929, extended approx. 1980),
- Railway station complex (brick station around 1930; railway workers' house, brick around 1930),
- TRAF0 station, (3 Kolejowa Street),
- Mill, currently electric, 13 Młyńska Street,
- The Vodka and Liqueur Factory Complex (brick, 1928),
- Houses (No. 3 - brick Kolejowa St., around 1920; No. 2 - 15 Miechowska St., brick, approx. 1920, No. 15 - Miechowska St. No. 27 - brick Żarnowiecka St., approx. 1930 No. 43 - ul. Żarnowiecka, brick, around the 1st quarter of the 20th century).

The empty spaces are also located on the site of the former railway station, which is now only partially inhabited and does not have any public function (pp. 97-98).

As indicated in the revitalization program of the Pałecznicza district, there are several vacant buildings in the area, including:

- The Manor House in Nadzów (currently the building is not suitable for use, but after modernization and maintenance works, it could be adapted for new purposes; there are plans to create a support centre for addicts there) (p.22),
- Old school in Winiary (as indicated in the program, the current condition of the school building allows for new social functions; it is to be adapted to the needs of the young entrepreneurs, non-governmental organizations and other purposes aimed at improving the social situation of residents) (p. 25).

In the revitalization program of the Kamienica Górna district, the excessive importance of the problems created by empty spaces has been indicated. "The designated area is characterized by a large amount of undeveloped and degraded private and public spaces, which, due to their condition, disturb the spatial order and make the space unattractive and dangerous". (pp. 52-53)



Figure 59. The palace and manor complex in Kamienica Górna / Source: InicjatywaLokalna.pl

In the area of revitalization in the municipality of Klucze, there are several vacant buildings, which could be used to achieve new goals and consequently improve the quality of life of the inhabitants. These include:

- Dietl Manor at 1 Rabsztyńska Street - the building has great area potential because it is located in the very centre of Klucze. Entered in 2010 on the list of monuments, it is currently excluded from use by the decision of the PINB. However, it is necessary to renovate it, because it has been deteriorating for about 10 years,
- The "Papiernik" Community Centre at 2A Rudnicka Street,
- Post-industrial areas located to the west of housing estates of the revitalization sub-area 1 (p. 87).

Similarly, according to Kościelisko. The occurrence of vacancies has been classified into groups of spatial problems - in the commune there are areas with buildings that have lost their function, requiring modernization and renovation (pp. 52-53):

- The area of WDW Kościelisko including the facilities of food, technical and uniform warehouses, the location of garages for cars and buses for the Recreation Team service, facilities intended for repair workshops for vehicles, mechanical equipment and craft workshops,
- Recreation complex DW Salamandra,
- Biathlon stadium complex,
- Complex of the Military Training and Conditioning Centre.

In the Łukowice district, there are buildings and empty spaces which, after renovation and adaptation to the needs of the inhabitants, could serve the local community (pp. 55-57).

These are, among others: The building of the fire station of the Volunteer Fire Department in Łukowica



Figure 60. The Volunteer Fire Department building in Łukowica / Source: GPR for the district of Łukowica for the years 2016-2023.

The building of the village club in Młyczyńska:

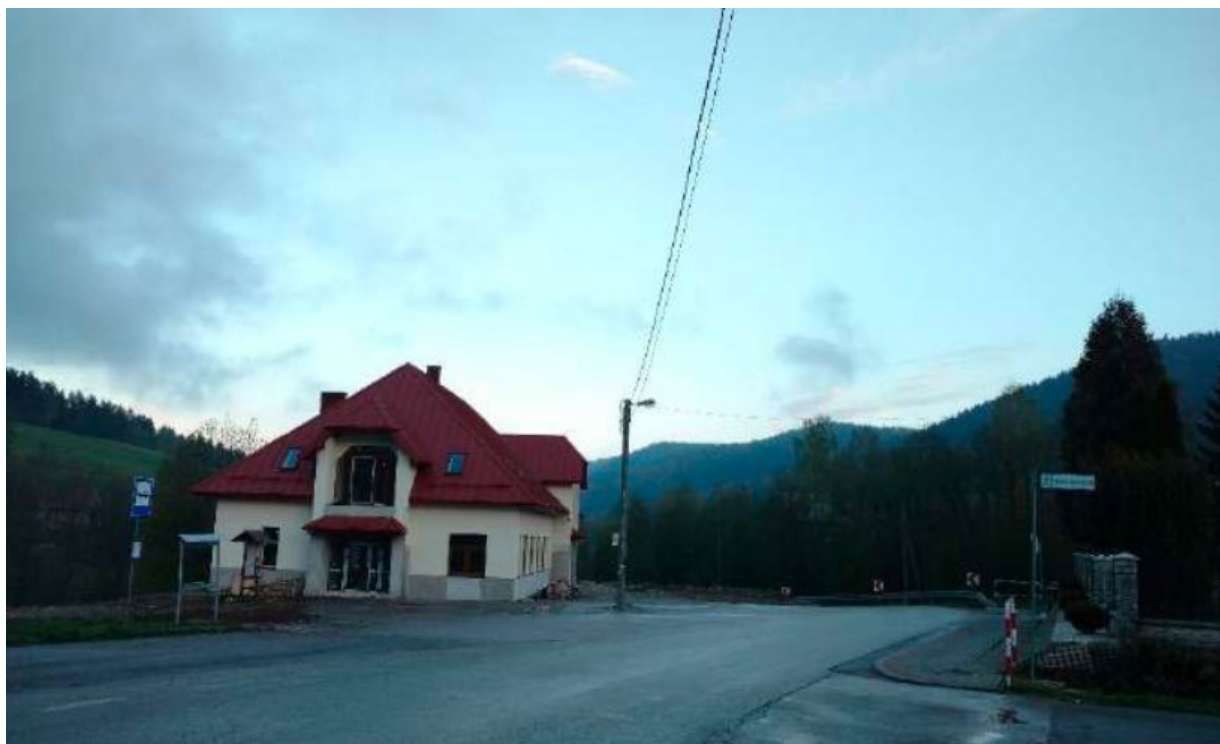


Figure 61. The building of the village club in Młyczyńska, Łukowica district / Source: GPR for the district of Łukowica for the years 2016-2023.

The revitalization program of the Dębno commune indicates the presence of vacant buildings, which requires the development of these spaces and adapting them to the diverse needs of the residents.

Building of the Volunteer Fire Department in Doły:



Figure 62. The Volunteer Fire Department building in Dębno, district of Dębno / Source: GPR for the district of Dębno for the years 2016-2026 (pp. 57, 63, 64).

Municipal building in Doły:



Figure 63. Municipal building in Doły, commune of Dębno / Source: GPR for the commune of Dębno for the years 2016-2026 (pp. 57, 63, 64).

The building of the liquidated Ceramic Technical School in Łysa Góra:



Figure 64. Building of the Ceramic Technical School in Łysa Góra, Dębno / Source: GPR for the district of Dębno for the years 2016-2026 (pp. 57, 63, 64).

The building of the former post office in Łysa Góra:



Figure 65. The building of the former post office in Łysa Góra, Dębno / Source: GPR for the district of Dębno for the years 2016-2026 (pp. 57, 63, 64).

The building of the former "Kamionka" ceramic cooperative in Łysa Góra



Figure 66. Building of the Ceramic Co-operative "Kamionka" in Łysa Góra / Source: GPR for the district of Dębno for the years 2016-2026 (pp. 57, 63, 64).

In the Rabka-Zdrój commune, on the other hand, there are several vacant buildings, including:



Figure 67. Empty space at the Chabówka railway station, Rabka-Zdroj district, / Source: Pro Regio Consulting (pp. 56-57).

A degraded building in the Spa Park:



Figure 68. A degraded building in the Zdrojowy Park, Rabka Zdroj / Source: Pro Regio Consulting (pp. 56-57).

In the Ryglisce district, in the very centre of the Lubcza village, apart from the buildings essential for the functioning of the inhabitants, there are vacant spaces and warehouse areas. These facilities affect the aesthetics of the area and reduce the sense of security of the residents. Examples of these places are:

Disordered area around run-down warehouses in the centre of Lubcza



Figure 69. Warehouses in the centre of Lubcza, Ryglisce district / Source: Peridea

The building of the former orphanage with the unstructured area around it has been extended many times and served many different functions important for the local community over the years. For several years it has been mostly abandoned, falling into disrepair and not subject to any investment activities.



Figure 70. Former orphanage in Lubcza, Rygllice district / Source Source: Peridea.

According to the analysis of the revitalization program of the Czernichów district, the village of Rybna located in the district is heavily neglected, the problem is exacerbated by the presence of vacant buildings in a very poor conditions, threatening the health and life of the inhabitants (the so-called Old Mleczarnia, old church buildings) (p. 21).

The building of the old dairy:



Figure 71. Stara Mleczarnia, Rybna, district of Czernichów

The building of the former parish house in Rybna:



Figure 72. Former parish house, Rybna, Czernichów district

The building of the so-called the teacher's house in Kamień:



Figure 73. The Teacher's House in Kamień, Czernichów district

The Rosary Chapel in Czernichów:



Figure 74. The Rosary chapel in Czernichów / Source: GPR for the district of Czernich in (pp. 11-13).

In Gotcza, on the other hand, in the Trzebień sub-area, there is a degraded post-industrial facility (the area of the former State Agricultural Farm), which is currently not used and constitutes as a potential candidate for the development of the economic zone (p. 58). In the revitalization program it was emphasized that in the Chobędza area, the problem is also the poor condition of the TSO building; a large number of older buildings (built before 1939) (p. 66).

In Limanowa, the qualitative analysis carried out showed the existence of problems in the spatial and functional sphere, including empty spaces. An example of such a space is the building under the former primary school located in the Bałazówka-Kisielówka-Makowica-Pasierbiec area. After the school has been closed, the building which used to perform public functions is not used for the benefit of the local community and is subject to degradation (p. 37). During the consultations, the inhabitants of the district also mentioned the spaces existing in the revitalization area, in the past fulfilling important public, social and economic functions, currently unused or insufficiently used due to its poor condition (p. 41). This shows that the problem of vacancy is noticeable.

In the district of Szerzyny, in the Czerma area, an analysis of the technical sphere showed a large number of empty spaces – Seven (7) such facilities per 100 inhabitants, while in the district it is on average 4.8. In the Revitalization Sub-area 1. Czerma, these are mainly wooden buildings housing single-family households that are prime candidates for comprehensive renovation (pp. 30-32).

In many communes, there are abandoned park or manor-park complexes. Examples can be found in Radziemice, where the Manor House in Zielenice is located. This property will be comprehensively modernized as part of renovation and construction works. The works will include thorough thermal modernization and interior renovation, including purchase of equipment (p. 25). Likewise in Lipinki, the empty spaces found in the area of revitalization is a former manor and park complex. There are plans to create meeting places for non-governmental organizations operating in Lipinki, connected with a memorial chamber, where workshops on the rich history of the region will be held. There are also plans to create a cafe as a place for young people to meet (p. 32).

Surprisingly, there are empty spaces in buildings with historic values. For example, in the district of Książ Wielki there is a vacant building - a synagogue from the first half of the 19th century (pp. 42-43):



Figure 75. Wooden houses for renovation, Czerma, Szerzyny commune / Source: GPR for the Szerzyny commune for 2016-2023



Figure 76. Empty spaces: the synagogue in the Książ Wielki district / Source: Książ Wielki Commune Office.

In turn, in the Kłaj district, empty spaces are grouped in the Żeleński Palace, which was state-owned during the Polish People's Republic. Inhabitants expressed concerns that the former buildings, transformed in the past, would be subject to gradual degradation.



Figure 77. Żeleński Palace, Kłaj district / Source: <http://www.palac-zelenskich.pl/palac-zelenskich.html>

The area in which the Plastics Processing Plant operated was gradually degrading over the years after the cessation of production. Currently, many buildings are in a good condition due to lack of use. There are social problems such as alcohol consumption, vandalism and crime.



Figure 78. Former Plastics Processing Plant, Kłaj / Source: GPR for the district of Kłaj for 2017-2025

Summary

In revitalization programs, empty spaces in housing is not always noticed, there is empty commercial properties and the issues of generally degraded public spaces, buildings and the lack of infrastructure. The problem of empty apartments and residential buildings is most pronounced in large cities with a large real estate stock. The analysis of the housing stock has been presented in more detail in the program of Wrocław.

The fewer than seventy (70) districts selected for the analysis of voivodeships mentioned in this chapter indicate primarily their own buildings, but also those belonging to other entities and private persons, as well as those with an unclear legal status, abandoned or in the course of clarifying the legal status. These are very diverse spaces, both in terms of their former function and size, number of storeys or technology and the period of construction. Most often, the most problematic for local authorities are large plots of land with numerous buildings with a diverse, but mainly industrial function. Technical buildings (e.g. boiler houses, mills) are a big challenge, currently completely unused and very difficult to adapt to other functions.

Buildings and dwellings usually require thorough renovation and upgrading, many other properties can be reused for the needs of local communities by local governments. Good examples are the adaptation of buildings for the needs of local activity centres and places for local organizations, care homes, where the easiest spaces to use are former school buildings, small public use buildings - community centres, buildings of the Volunteer Fire Department.

A great value of revitalization programs is considering public consultations and the voice of residents. Neglected buildings have a negative impact on the image of a town or city, they can pose a direct threat due to their structural condition, but also an opportunity for dangerous and socially unacceptable behaviour (alcohol consumption, acts of vandalism, starting a fire), affecting the residents' sense of safety. The programs also consider the cultural and historical value of some properties, also as perceived by the residents.

Revitalization programs rarely include ideas for the use of real estate and possible changes in the function of buildings and premises. They are mainly related to economic activity, visual aspects and improvement of the quality of public spaces and infrastructure. There are no ideas relating to building adaptation or adaptation for the numerous buildings mentioned in these documents. This applies to historic buildings, in large complexes like palaces, but also just houses and other small buildings. Adaptation of assisted housing or other services requires partners who can provide such services - again in the case of one district is the cooperation with Caritas.

8. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to estimate the number of empty spaces in Poland, including those in non-municipal resources, to examine the possibility of converting them into affordable housing for rent, and to assess the chances of reducing the housing gap in Poland in the affordable housing sector, using the potential of the identified vacant properties. This study can be considered the first in a series to explore a more comprehensive description of the differentiation of empty spaces themselves, changes in the perception of their occurrence and, finally, trends in their development. Converting housing units is one possibility of increasing the number of available rents, a serious challenge is to restore former housing properties to their functions, considering the current standards and expectations of potential residents.

1) General conclusions:

- a) The classification of the space as a vacant building raises many questions and doubts. For the purpose of this study, empty space was defined in relation to the period of non-use: more than 12 months. The technical condition was not defined, which caused many questions from the respondents. Buildings withdrawn from use were often not considered vacant, as well as premises intended for renovation or not meeting other standards and guidelines, i.e. not intended for rent.
- b) Only local authorities are currently reporting vacancy data to the GUS, while the State Treasury and its companies, and other private entities that have real estate for rent, also have significant resources. The British research conducted in this project shows that the resources of empty and unused real estate can have religious associations - in Poland it is also possible but reports on this subject are rudimentary (with some information appearing in revitalization programs).
- c) In the questions, the responses from the questionnaire and as part of the analysis of all gathered information, the question of the so-called renovation gap was identified: poor technical conditions of buildings and apartments, the need for long-term renovation procedures and very large financial outlays.
- d) A reason for the appearance of empty spaces can be property problems: claims or ongoing identification processes of the current owner.
- e) Districts can identify real estate belonging to other entities as uninhabited and unused on the basis of registers kept and services provided.
- f) The empty spaces identified in the study are very diverse properties, from non-residential properties and one- or two-room houses indicated in the questionnaire to entire palaces or post-industrial building complexes described in the inventories and revitalization programs.

2) Conclusions from the survey and the received inventories:

- a) One hundred and fifty-four (154) buildings of various types were reported in the survey, though only sixty-seven (67) records concerned various units in buildings. It was indicated that one hundred and eight (108) of the reported properties could be used / adapted for housing purposes. Most of them (sixty-eight (68) compared to the forty (40) that can be transformed) are too degraded, do not meet the standards or require too much expenditure for the respondents to positively assess their suitability for housing purposes. In the case of twenty-two (22) buildings that could be transformed, the respondents knew about PINB's decisions to withdraw from use.
- b) As part of the inventories sent in, eight hundred and seventeen (817) buildings were identified as vacant, as well as six thousand, two hundred and one (6,201) residential and commercial properties, most of them in Wałbrzych.
- c) Information on empty spaces is difficult to obtain. Even in local authorities that should have data on their real estate resources find it difficult to obtain, including the purposes of the developed documents (which is confirmed by the analysis of revitalization programs).
- d) Information on empty spaces in districts with a large stock is collected and updated, but mainly for the purposes of the current management of the districts housing stock, non-standardization and specialized IT tools. The collection and processing of data each time involves additional work of the officials servicing the property stock.
- e) In municipalities where empty spaces are inventoried and a conscious policy is in place (preferential lease in the case of commercial premises and renovation policy along with the allocation of premises for renovation for rent), the number of empty spaces may be systematically reduced.
- f) Smaller municipalities may record empty buildings belonging to private owners' resources, outside their municipal resources, on the basis of other mandatory registers.
- g) In the case of very degraded buildings of low value, demolition can be a way to organize the space and improve the development of a given plot or area. Such solutions are already practiced in depopulating cities, where there is no need to develop such buildings for residential purposes (e.g. in Wałbrzych), but also in cities that need more apartments, where new, larger buildings are being built on the same plot (e.g. projects in Warsaw). Demolitions increase order and the feeling of orderly space.

3) Conclusions from the studies in the case:

- a) In the cities for which the case study was conducted, there were a total of four thousand, eight hundred and seventy-one (4,871) vacant housing units, within Warsaw's dominant stock.
- b) Changes in the rules of renting flats from municipal resources (not spaces, but communal and social lease contracts), changes in technical standards for residential spaces, especially in the context of units returning after ten or even several years of lease, mean that often the spaces cannot be rented again: they do not meet the criteria for a separate apartment. This especially applies to individual rooms, units without a toilet, which are vacated by the current residents, and located in larger cities, with resources in older tenement houses.
- c) The procedures for handing over the apartment to the next tenant may differ in districts, but always include the necessary steps on the part of the district (preparation of the space for lease) and the potential tenant (acceptance and verification of documents). This means that although the spaces are empty, the renting process is in progress.
- d) Empty buildings and their development require ideas and large financial outlays, just like renovations of existing municipal resources. Local authorities are unable to cope with general renovation of multi-apartment buildings without external financial support. They use a variety of funds for most projects.
- e) The use and adaptation of smaller buildings, especially for housing or residential services, can be cheaper than building new facilities.

4) Conclusions from statistical data:

- a) Currently, official statistics are not sufficient to capture the complexity of the problem of empty spaces and unused buildings in general. There is a need to clarify the definition of housing vacancy and to extend it with additional information, e.g. building vacancies or commercial properties, and to specify the length of the period of non-use, as well as to publish information on buildings decommissioned and demolished.
- b) Data from the 2011 census: Five hundred and thirty-four thousand, seven hundred (534,700) uninhabited apartments (4% of all identified apartments) in inhabited buildings, plus four hundred and seventy-nine thousand, five hundred (479,500) uninhabited buildings (8% of all identified buildings) with at least one apartment.
- c) Housing vacancies reported by local authorities at the end of 2018: Fifty-four thousand, two hundred and six (54,206), while significant changes in the number of empty spaces since 2003, especially significant increases, may result from changes in the classification of apartments and real estate and a detailed inventory of resources.
- d) A very high rate of empty spaces by municipalities, which is confirmed by the data collected in this study.

5) Conclusions from the analysis of the revitalization program:

- a) Housing vacancies are not always an element considered in a diagnosis prepared for the purposes of revitalization programs. Usually, only communal vacancies are mentioned as a negative phenomenon.
- b) The analysis of municipal revitalization programs and consultations with residents shows that empty and neglected properties are more and more often perceived as a problem: image-related for the city, related to safety for residents, neglect of the cultural heritage of a given place.
- c) Plans for the adaptation of vacant buildings for social purposes are successful if they are the result of a dialogue with the local community as part of revitalization programs.
- d) The programs do not include an analysis of possible uses of empty buildings and premises, there are no ideas for the use of real estate.

6) Recommendations (including further research):

- a) Further research is needed on empty buildings and apartments in the stocks of already identified owners, as well as defining others who would potentially be interested in long-term development of real estate, e.g. based on lease agreements with entities such as SAN.
- b) Revitalization programs contribute to the identification of empty spaces, but ideas and examples of good practice regarding the development of such properties, especially for housing purposes, are still lacking. More information on successful implementations may be helpful for communes that are just preparing their inventories and documents on revitalization.
- c) Districts and the State Treasury inherit real estate, but also cooperative ownership rights to the spaces. There are no legal solutions for such units, which are not real estate within the meaning of the provisions of the municipal property. They do not automatically fall into the housing stock like other real estate. It may be necessary to identify good practices regarding such spaces and the possibility of using them for social purposes, either alone or in cooperation with NGOs.
- d) Financing programs for the expansion of municipal housing resources should provide for the possibility of major renovations, considering potential obstacles in the course of such works, more likely than in the case of the implementation of new construction investments.
- e) It seems appropriate to investigate whether the existing IT solutions for housing resource management could be used by local authority to inventory their unused resources, and whether it would allow for more efficient internal reporting and obtaining information for statistical purposes.

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