

Summary of Findings of the Obuda Social Survey of Residents

In the summer of 2009 a survey of the residents of the Szolo Utca apartment block was conducted, with the aim of finding out residents' attitudes towards the Staccato project and related energy and environmental issues. Questionnaires were delivered to all apartments in the building, and 295 completed questionnaires were returned (c. 1/3 of residents).

The main findings were as follows:

First, residents were asked about their current levels of satisfaction with energy costs, comfort in winter, and comfort in summer. More than 2/3 expressed dissatisfaction with the costs of energy, and even higher levels of dissatisfaction were recorded with the comfort of the apartment in summer. By contrast, comfort in winter was not such a concern (2/3 were satisfied).

Second, residents were asked directly about how important it was for them to save energy. Almost all considered it at least "important", and fully 80% rated it "very important", indicating that the objectives of the Staccato project resonate with residents' own priorities. From data presented by residents it was clear that many of them live in fuel poverty, as 80% stated that their monthly household income was less than 200,000 Forints, while the average self-assessment of monthly energy bills was in excess of 30,000 Forints, with the highest expenditure element (more than half the total) being for heating. In this context it is understandable that saving money on energy should be such a high priority.

Third, residents were asked some questions aimed at gauging their general level of concern about environmental issues. Here, too, the residents responded positively: for instance, over 70% strongly agreed that energy needs to be provided sustainably, while only 1/4 agreed that environmentalists exaggerate the significance of environmental problems. They also recognised the need for lifestyle change, with only 20% agreeing that science and technology would solve our environmental problems without the need for lifestyle changes, and over half disagreeing.

Fourth, residents were asked about their energy-saving behaviour. Consistent with other findings, the great majority demonstrated concern: for instance 2/3 always check the energy labels of new appliances, and over 80% always turn off the light when they are not in a room.

Fifth, residents were asked about their general opinions of the Staccato project. Over 60% believed it would be very useful, while fewer than 1% thought it would not be useful. Also, only 10% expressed some concern about the disruption the renovation process would cause for them, while 3/4 thought it would not be too bad or would be no problem at all.

Sixth, residents were asked about information received about the Staccato project. Here too, the findings were generally positive. Over half thought they had received about the right amount of information, while those who thought otherwise were fairly evenly balanced between those who thought they had received too much (17%) and too little (27%). However, roughly half would have appreciated more information regarding energy costs, energy meters, and/or solar boilers. Regarding the quality of the information, 2/3 thought it clear, and only about 12% thought it unclear or very unclear. The great majority (nearly 80%) also thought they had been informed at about the right time regarding the project, with about 10% each thinking they had been informed either too early or too late.

Seventh, residents were asked about their expectations concerning the post-renovation situation. Regarding energy bills, majorities expected bills in all categories to come down. The greatest expectations were attached to heating and hot water charges, where around 90% expected some reduction and 15 and 20% (respectively) expected a significant reduction. By contrast, fewer than half expected their electricity bills to be reduced after the renovation. Positive expectations were also expressed about the impact of the renovation on the value of their property: More than 80% expected it would have some positive effect, with more than half anticipating a rise of more than 10% in the value of their property after the renovation work was completed.

Finally, residents were asked about their willingness to conduct energy-efficient renovation if the Staccato project were not going ahead. Here, a mixed picture emerged: about 30% had already undertaken such a renovation, and a further 30% said they would do it; 40%, however, said they would not otherwise conduct such a renovation, and this latter category also attached somewhat less importance to energy saving than the respondents as a whole.