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## Empty Houses for the Homeless project: Casas sin Gente para Gente sin Casa

### Geographic Area

Spain

### City

Vitoria-Gasteiz

### Language

English

### Type of Information

Project or programme

### Organisation

Fundación Arteale / Arteale Foundation

### Contact Person

Maria Jose Anitua (*Login to send email*)

### Contact Person Function

President

### Link

<http://www.arteale.org> (<http://www.arteale.org>)

### Project Start

26/06/2018

### Ongoing Project

Yes

### Summary

The project helps refugees find their new homes by establishing strong trust between them and the owners of empty homes through the use of collaborative law and conscious contracts.

### Issue/Challenge and Goal/Assumption



Europe has more than 11 million empty houses (<https://www.dw.com/en/empty-property-in-eu-could-house-all-of-europes-homeless-and-more/a-17463912>), with 3.4 million of them in Spain alone. The Arteale Foundation points out that while there are various reasons why residential dwellings may be left empty, a common issue is that the traditional process of renting does not allow landlords and tenants to establish trust, thus scaring home owners from listing their property for rent. Owners' worries about renting out to the wrong tenants are further exacerbated by the fact that Spain requires contracts to be set up for a minimum of at least five years.

On the other hand, refugees are vulnerable to homelessness and in need of reliable housing options. The Arteale Foundation, founded by two lawyers in 2017, saw this as an opportunity to create partnerships between refugee families and real estate owners looking for tenants.

### **How does it work**

**Key to the success of the Empty Houses for the Homeless project is its focus on collaborative law – a process based on good faith and disclosure between home owners and lessees.** Arteale assists the dialogue between refugees and home owners, and helps set up '**conscious contracts**'. These contracts are different from the traditional rental agreements as they also reflect the values, needs and constraints of both parties. The contracts include a '**peace pact**' which establishes how the parties would resolve any unexpected situations and conflicts that may arise during the duration of the contract.

### **Teaser Contratos Conscientes Alquiler Refugiados (Inglés)**



As the Arteale Foundation focuses on the connection between law and art, the process also utilises artistic techniques as a communication tool in order to create an atmosphere of empathy and compassion.

The project so far benefits refugees although the foundation is planning to include other migrants, too. Refugee families in need of accommodation are identified with the help of the public administration, which also helps get Arteale in touch with the owners of empty houses. The homes need to be situated in cities but the project may prioritise areas that would be beneficial to the migrants' integration. Homes also need to be in good condition, with refurbishments costing up to 6,000 euro sometimes borne by the owners, or, in case funding is available, by Arteale.



Local **volunteers play a vital part** in the process. They do not need to be lawyers but undergo a training on collaborative law. Volunteer teams which include lawyers, coaches or psychologists are especially effective. The project also reaches out to student volunteers who have proven to be effective advocates for renting out to refugee families within their communities.

### **Results**

- In 15 months, six empty homes were included in the conscious rental scheme and 20 persons found accommodation;
- So far, 15 volunteers have joined the project during its first two years;
- The project currently operated in Vitoria-Gasteiz, with plans to expand in the region, as well as the EU and the USA;
- In the next three years, more than 200 empty homes are expected to be provide accommodation to 800 tenants from vulnerable groups;
- The project collaborates with schools in order to disseminate information and attract new volunteers, so far reaching out to some 2,000 students

### **Evaluation**

The Arteale Foundation gathers annual feedback from the participants. Since January 2020, the foundation has been working to systematise its process in an attempt to scale up in other countries and include other beneficiaries.

### **Who will benefit?**

- Refugees who often struggle to find accommodation in the traditional market;
- Owners of empty homes, previously hesitant to enter the rental market;
- In the long term, the inclusion of more rental options to the market would increase competitiveness

### **Source of funding and Resources used**

The project is funded by private donations and grants. In the future, the foundation plans to target professionals, real estate foundations and social enterprises interested in supporting the project.

## **Related Content**

**Stockholm - Swedish Integration Forum: Multicultural Neighborhoods** (<https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/event/stockholm---swedish-integration-forum-multicultural-neighborhoods>) 16/09/2020

**Prague - IOM Summer School on Migration Studies 2020** (<https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/event/prague-iom-summer-school-on-migration-studies-2020>) 24/08/2020

**Social interpretation service in Belgium translates COVID-19 information in 14 languages** (<https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/intpract/social-interpretation-service-in-belgium-translates-covid-19-information-in-14-languages>) 06/04/2020



**COVID-19's impact on migrant communities**

06/04/2020

**(<https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/covid-19s-impact-on-migrant-communities>)**

**Denmark – New hotline in 25 languages about coronavirus**

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