

The programme to reduce long-term homelessness 2008 – 2011

FINAL REPORT

(unauthorized translation)

Juha Kaakinen, programme leader

3.10.2012

Contents

Abstract	3
1 Background of the programme.....	4
2 Follow-up work and evaluation	4
2.1 Evaluation of cost-effects	4
2.2 Evaluation of the programme	5
2.3 International cooperation.....	5
2.4 Development work in the programme.....	5
2.5 Reaching quantitative targets	6
2.6 Change in long-term homelessness in 2008 – 2011.....	7
2.7 Investment subsidies by ARA	8
2.8 Hiring support staff.....	8
2.9 Conversion of shelters	9
2.10 Improving housing services for homeless people released from prison	9
2.11 Preventing homelessness	10
2.11.1 Preventing youth homelessness.....	10
2.11.2 National guidance and development of housing advisory services	11
3 Other measures in the programme	12
3.1 Housing scheme competition	12
3.2 Communication	12
3.3. Improving participation.....	12
4 Main results in the signatory cities	12
4.1 Helsinki	12
4.2 Espoo	14
4.3 Vantaa.....	14
4.4 Tampere.....	15
4.5 Turku.....	17
4.6 Lahti	17
4.7 Joensuu	18
4.8 Jyväskylä	19
4.9 Kuopio.....	19
4.10 Oulu	20
5 Evaluation and conclusions for the programme period 2012 – 2015.....	21
5.1 Housing First principle in Finland	21
5.2 The tenant turnover	22
5.3 Production of rental housing	22

Final report: Programme to reduce long-term homelessness 2008 – 2011

Abstract

The programme as a whole

The programme to reduce long-term homelessness in 2008-2011 was based on principal decision by the government on February 14th 2008. In the state administration the programme was implemented and coordinated by the Ministry of Environment and in the state administration also The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, The Criminal Sanctions Agency, The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA)¹ as well as Finland's Slot Machine Association (RAY)² took part in the implementation. The programme covered ten cities with the largest percentage of homeless people (Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Tampere, Lahti, Jyväskylä, Oulu, Joensuu, Kuopio and Turku), which signed letters of intent with the state administration. In addition many national and local NGOs and other service providers took part in the execution. Two of these, the Youth Housing Association and the Criminal Sanctions Agency implemented special projects for their target groups in the programme. The documents and other materials are available on the ARA website.

Background

The targets of the programme were based on suggestions made by a working group led by vice mayor Paula Kokkonen (Ahkerat 2008) and on the previous report (Name on the door 2007) by the working group nominated by the Ministry of Environment. The aim was to create an integrated programme which enables tackling the hardest long-term homelessness and improves prevention of homelessness. The target was to halve long-term homelessness by year 2011 by creating sustainable and permanent solutions. In practice the implementation was made by applying Housing First principle which in Finland has meant a home of one's own with a lease based on the Act on Residential Leases and individual support services when necessary. One of the targets was to get rid of hostels which maintain and lengthen homelessness. As a quantitative target this meant providing at least 1250 new dwellings, supported dwellings or service housing for the target group in 10 cities taking part in the programme. A wide range of preventive measures such as increasing housing advisory work and the national project on supported youth housing were included in the programme.

Changes in the numbers on long term homeless people

By the end of 2011 long-term homelessness had decreased by 28 % from the year 2008, at the end of 2012 the decrease is approximately 40 %. It is estimated that the number of long-term homeless people will be halved by the end of 2013.

Financing

The total assets in the programme including all state and RAY funding, funding by the local authorities and interest-subsidy loans have been approximately 170M €. With this funding it has been possible to guarantee a dwelling, a home and necessary support services for altogether 1500 long term-homeless people. Since there are people who have already moved to more independent housing the programme actually covers even a larger group of the long-term homeless people.

The economic impact of improving the housing conditions of homeless people

A study conducted in the Härmälä project in Tampere proved that arranging housing for homeless people is affordable also in economic terms: the study showed that arranging housing for a homeless person in in-

¹ <http://www.ara.fi/en-US>

² <https://www.ray.fi/en/beneficiaries>

tensively supported housing has saved on an average 14 000 € as a result of decreasing service use when a comparison was made with the services used during homelessness. Thus it can be estimated that the investments in the programme will be paid back in 5-6 years. Increased income tax revenue is not included in this calculation.³

In addition, by using the financing of the programme over 200 new jobs of a permanent nature were created in support services. The indirect employment effects have been remarkable.

This final report describes both the quantitative and qualitative results of the programme, the targets reached as well as the main results in cities taking part in it.

1 Background of the programme

The programme to reduce long-term homelessness 2008-2011 was based on the principal decision by the government on February 14th 2008. Letters of intent on implementation of the programme were signed by state authorities and the ten cities taking part in the programme. City specific implementation plans were included in agreements of intent and they came into force on September 1st 2008.

2 Follow-up work and evaluation

The Ministry of Environment nominated a steering and follow-up group chaired by director Jarmo Lindén from the Housing Financing and Development Centre ARA until summer 2011. After moving to other duties he was followed by director Kari Salmi from ARA. The large steering group has had three meetings. The large steering group gathered a small follow-up group which has had 9-10 meetings per year. The programme leader has given an annual report on the implementation.

2.1 Evaluation of cost effects

A research by the Tampere University of Technology financed by ARA on the Härmälä housing unit offering intensively supported housing stated that intensively supported housing meant about 211 000 € in savings in the annual total costs when the service use of 15 tenants was compared before and after living in the supported housing unit. The savings per one tenant were approximately 14 000 € which is over 50 % of the total costs during homelessness. Most of the savings were from institutional care in welfare services in other words from decreased use of hospitals or institutional services for intoxicant abusers. Härmälä is an intensively supported housing unit which shows also in the number of staff: there are 5 workers and 22 tenants in the unit. In practice savings in the service use cover the wages in intensively supported housing.

When it comes to average savings, we can estimate that the housing and supported housing brought into use by the end of 2011 has caused annually approximately 21,3M € total savings in costs caused by homelessness.

An evaluation on the costs-effects of homelessness and housing advice services was published in the publication series of the Ministry of Environment at the beginning of 2011. A further research has started in Helsinki and Espoo.

2.2 Evaluation of the programme

³ <http://www.ym.fi/download/noname/%7B1851D9E3-ABF3-4A60-A064-83C7737A96C0%7D/32045>

The programme leader has given a monthly report on the progress in implementing as well as crucial topical questions in meetings of the follow-up group. Also themed specialist reviews have been heard in the meetings to help the follow-up group to evaluate the progress. The steering group has had annual meetings to evaluate progress in the programme. This has offered an opportunity to share views between the financiers, cities involved, the church and NGOs. The implementation has also been evaluated in annual visits in the cities by the representatives of The Ministry of Environment and The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

The evaluation on the programme as a whole was carried out as an international Peer review, which was mainly financed by the European Commission. Representatives from 9 European countries took part in the evaluation seminar arranged in Helsinki on December 2nd and 3rd 2010. The evaluation raised several important views for planning the following programme. The discussion placed strong emphasis on the effectiveness and uniqueness of the Finnish programme in the European context, the meaning of Housing First principle, the use of existing housing and the need to improve the variety of housing related rehabilitation including support in employment. The final report of an independent international expert was published at the beginning on 2011.⁴

The Ministry of Environment, as the organization responsible for the implementation, has also followed the programme as a part of its performance guidance.

Quantitative targets of the program have been assessed on the basis of ARA statistics on homelessness in relation to the targets set. The results of the programme as a whole and the results of the cities are presented in this report in paragraph 2.5.

2.3 International cooperation

The programme has sparked a lot of international interest and international cooperation has been active and versatile. The programme has been presented in European countries on several occasions and to public authorities and NGOs in different countries. The meaning of persistent cooperation has been emphasized in international connections and the target has been to actively influence EU policy making through occasions arranged by the Commission and FEANTSA.

Evaluation of the programme was carried out as EU-cooperation. The programme leader has represented Finland in a similar peer review evaluation on the Portuguese strategy on homelessness in November 2010.

Ministry of Environment was actively represented in the preparation committee for the first European Consensus Conference on Homelessness. In the Conference arranged in Brussels in December 2010, the Finnish programme to reduce homelessness was presented as a good example of a national policy programme targeting to eliminate homelessness.

2.4 Development work in the programme

In development work a new kind of interdisciplinary approach is developed to support the Housing First principle that aims to tackle difficult substance abuse and mental health problems endangering success in housing. The interest in developing services for homeless people shows in participation in annual national seminars on homelessness: 200-300 professionals are taking part every year.

After the programme started in 2008 experts on housing and homelessness working on different levels were widely called to joint development work (mental health workers, civil servants and NGOs working with homeless people, young people, people who had experienced homelessness etc.). The participants formed development networks focusing on a specific theme. As a continuation for the development net-

⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1024&langId=en&newsId=1419&furtherNews=yes>

work a more outlined and target oriented project was planned and so "Nimi ovesa" ("Name on the door") project funded by Tekes⁵ was created.

"Name on the door" was a two year development project on services for homeless people and it started in August 2010. The objective of this research-assisted project was to develop services based on the Housing First principle in the service systems for project partners with the aim to decrease and prevent homelessness.

The main method in the joint development work was systematic networking between municipalities and partner organisations, and a special role was given to the expert knowledge of service users and experts by experience.

Cities of Espoo, Helsinki, Tampere and Vantaa, Helsinki Deaconess Institute⁶, Silta NGO⁷ and Vailla vaki-naista asuntoa NGO⁸ took part in the project. The project was coordinated by Socca.⁹ Also the members of earlier development networks in other cities have been able to take part in meetings. The main results of the project are gathered as a handbook for housing related social work on the website www.asuntoensin.fi.

Total costs of the project were about 2.7M € of which Tekes covered one half.

2.5 Reaching quantitative targets

The quantitative target of the programme was to address housing, supported housing or places of care for long-term homeless people by the year 2011 in cities as follows:

Helsinki	750
Espoo	125
Vantaa	125
Tampere, Turku, Lahti, Kuopio, Joensuu, Oulu and Jyväskylä in all	250
total	1 250

By the end of 2011 the number of flats and supported housing allocated for long-term homeless people in cities taking part in the programme was 1 519. The original target of 1 250 flats was thus exceeded by 269 flats. The target in the implementation plans of the cities was exceeded by 208 flats. 433 flats planned during the programme period will be in use in 2012. Part of the projects in the programme will be completed in 2013: altogether 191 flats will be available then. So there will be all in all 2 143 homes for long-term homeless people financed by the programme.

In addition to the numbers presented in the table below RAY has granted Y-Foundation¹⁰, Jyväskylä Street Mission¹¹, Kovaosaisten Ystävät ry (NGO), Krits foundation (NGO)¹² and the Blue Ribbon Foundation¹³ funds altogether approximately 35M € for buying flats for supported housing during the programme period. So far over 360 flats have been purchased with the financing of the programme period.

In this report only projects in the programme and city specific implementation plans are included. In several cities also housing from other projects and other housing providers has been allocated for long-term homeless people. It has been estimated that the number of these flats is several dozens.

⁵ the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation <http://www.tekes.fi/en/>

⁶ <https://www.hdl.fi/en/>

⁷ <http://www.siltaavalmennus.fi/index.php/tutustu-siltaan/briefly-in-english>

⁸ <http://www.vvary.fi/>

⁹ The Centre of Excellence on Social Welfare in the Helsinki Metropolitan area http://www.socca.fi/in_english

¹⁰ <http://www.ysaatio.fi/>

¹¹ <http://www.jklkl.fi/jyvaskyla-street-mission>

¹² http://www.krits.fi/fin/krits_in_english/

¹³ http://www.sininauhaliitto.fi/sininauhaliitto/sininauhaliittonnbspkonserni/in_english/

In cities the quantitative target has been reached with the exception of Vantaa and Jyväskylä where the target will be reached in 2012 due to the schedule of the projects and delays.

Reaching quantitative targets in cities is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Implementation in 2011

Flats	Target	Completed and in use 2008 - 2011	In use/target	Under construction, estimated completion in 2012	Under construction, estimated completion in 2013	Total
Helsinki	750	832	82	295	191	1318
Espoo	125	192	67	38		230
Vantaa	125	118	-7	88		206
Metropolitan region in all	1000	1142	142	421	191	1754
Others in all	311	377	66	12		389
Tampere	140	148	8			
Turku	30	59	29			
Joensuu	20	22	2			
Jyväskylä	30	25	-5	12		
Kuopio	20	20				
Lahti	50	60	10			
Oulu	21	43	22			
Total	1311	1519	208	433	191	2143

2.6 Change in long-term homelessness in 2008 – 2011

The table below describes the change in long-term homelessness during the program period. The numbers are based on statistics by ARA.

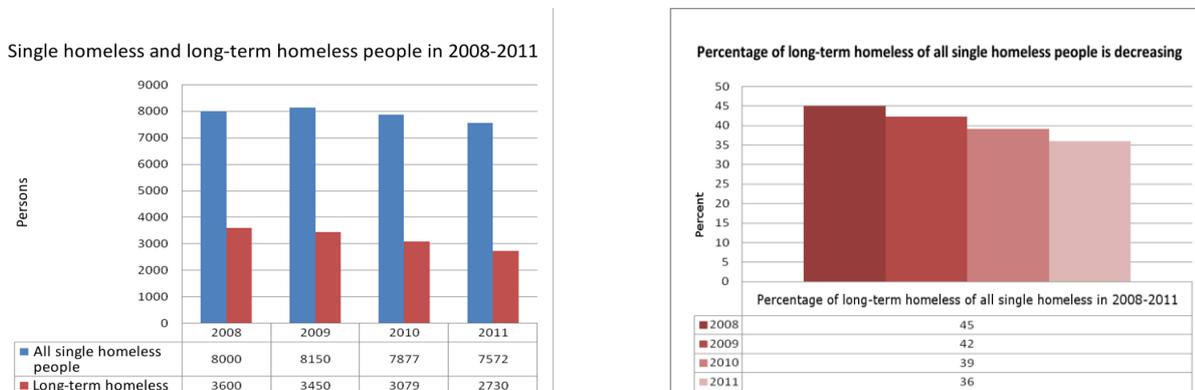
	single homeless		of which long-term homeless		long-term homeless %		flats planned in implementation plans, total		new flats	long-term homeless, estimated
	2008	2011	2008	2011	2008	2011	2011	2012	2012	2012
Helsinki	3150	3400	1591	1240	51	36	832	1011	179	1061
Espoo	486	624	385	336	79	54	192	230	38	190
Vantaa	611	545	140	148	23	27	118	206	88	60
Tampere	608	351	214	96	35	27	148	148		996
Turku	347	332	245	151	71	45	59	59		151
Lahti	208	180	108	78	52	43	60	60		78
Jyväskylä	154	182	80	38	52	21	25	37	12	26
Kuopio	186	220	33	55	18	25	20	20		55
Joensuu	103	100	85	17	83	17	22	22		17
Oulu	112	40	50	31	45	78	43	43		31
Total	5954	5974	2931	2190	49	37	1411	1836	425	1765

*In Espoo the Kuninkaantie housing unit (108 flats) was completed after ARA census at the end of 2011.

It was not until in 2008 that long-term homeless people were counted separately in statistics. The concept “long-term homeless” was specified during the first years of the programme. The definition used in ARA statistics is as follows: “Long-term homeless are people whose homelessness has become extended or threatens to become so for social or health reasons, to reach a period of over a year, or who have been homeless recurrently during the past three years”.

An alteration has been made on the grounds of the statistics in 2010: people living permanently in medical care institutions or similar are no longer regarded as long-term homeless.

The statistics allow several conclusions. During the programme period the amount of single homeless people has in practice remained on the same level whereas the amount of long-term homeless people in ARA statistics has decreased in cities taking part in the programme by 716 people or 25 %. The share of long-term homeless people of all single homeless is now 36 % and at the beginning of the program period (2008) it was 45 %. Even though the quantitative housing targets of the program were exceeded the target to halve long-term homelessness was reached only in Tampere, Jyväskylä and Joensuu. When the projects started during the programme period will be completed in 2012 the target is already reachable if there are no new long-term homeless people. According to the statistics the number of long-term homeless people has increased in Vantaa and in Kuopio.



When the programme was planned it was estimated in the “Name on the door” report by the planning committee as well as in the report by the programme committee that one third of all homeless people are long-term homeless. In this connection long-term homeless were referred to as a group of homeless people in need of help and heavy support, “the hard core of homeless”, and people living temporarily with relatives or friends were not included. According to ARA statistics 53 % of long-term homeless people i.e. 1 169 people live temporarily with relatives or friends. There are altogether 1 021 such long-term homeless people who don’t live with relatives or friends. Compared to this figure the target to halve long-term homelessness has been reached and clearly even exceeded.

2.7 Investment subsidies by ARA

ARA was authorized to grant 80M € investment subsidies for housing for special groups during the programme period. By the end of 2011 ARA had made reservations for building and renovating 1 452 flats of which 939 were in construction and 603 were in renovation or purchasing. Altogether about 58M € has been granted for these projects as investment grants. Part of this housing is under construction and will be completed during 2012 - 2013.

2.8 Hiring support staff

The Ministry of Social Welfare and Health has granted all cities involved in the program subsidies to hire support personnel. Altogether 10.3M € have been granted and this has made possible to hire altogether

205 new support workers to homeless services. Part of the grants has not been used due to delayed projects. So the total number of new staff is a little under 200.

2.9 Conversion of shelters

The program to convert shelters has made progress as planned. At the moment there are only 144 beds in shelters in Helsinki and 80 beds for emergency situations. In all remaining shelters a plan for functional changes has been made to replace shelters by supported housing. According to the plan shelter housing will end in Helsinki completely during 2013.

Rukkila shelter run by Suoja-Pirrtti (NGO) was renovated with RAY funds. The new unit with 21 flats for supported housing was started in March 2011. ARA has made reservations for renovating Kalevankatu shelter run by Kovaosaistenystävät NGO, the Alppikatu shelter run by Salvation Army and Väinölä home situated in Espoo. Renovation of Alppikatu will be completed at the end of 2012 and Kalevankatu at the beginning of 2013. Väinölä home won't probably come into use until 2014.

2.10 Improving housing services for homeless people released from prison

During the programme period RAY has granted funds for projects of two NGOs to develop support for people released from prison. Also new housing has been bought for ex-convicts with RAY funding. Jyväskylä City Mission has purchased altogether 18 flats for supported housing and NGO Krits 22 flats. Krits has also used RAY funding for renovating a five flat rehabilitative residential unit providing training in social skills in its premises. Krits has also coordinated a development network (VAT-Network) of NGOs arranging support for people released from prison.

In the Oma koti (Home of one's own) project by the Criminal Sanctions Agency there were different working groups in capital city area, Lahti, Jyväskylä, Kuopio, Joensuu and Oulu. In addition to the representatives of Criminal Sanctions Agency units also cities and NGOs were represented in these groups. Under the instruction of the guidance group these working groups have reported on homelessness of ex-convicts, on lack of social skills and also developed local cooperation especially for those released from prison and needing special support in housing to secure their housing pathways.

Approximately one third or more than one fourth of people released from prison are homeless. Also one third of people released on probation don't have a permanent abode; the situation of people in other community sanctions is better. About every third prisoner, every fourth in community sanctions and over one tenth of prisoners in open institutions lack everyday life skills. A data bank on everyday life skills was developed in the project.

Very different kinds of work models were applied in different cities during the project. In general the most effective way is to start housing skills training, assessment of service needs and planning the release well before releasing together with the network. Also other needs along with housing must to be considered. Support in housing must also be a part of housing services. Examples of other good practices are among others housing working groups, a network of contact persons, briefings arranged by partner organisations, information material about city services and training periods in independent living.

Also the reform and development work in the field of criminal sanctions has been useful for the project: Probation and aftercare agency and prison administration have been united in one organization, the Criminal Sanctions Agency¹⁴. This has made possible to develop more effective client processes. The Criminal Sanctions Agency has provided a handbook on releasing and started the work of release units to which also the Oma koti –project has been able to contribute. The Criminal Sanctions Agency has made a separate final report on the project.

¹⁴ <http://www.kriminaalihuolto.fi/en/index/criminalsanctionsagency.html>

2.11 Preventing homelessness

2.11.1 Preventing youth homelessness

A national project on youth housing was funded by Finland's Slot Machine Association RAY and coordinated by the Youth Housing Association¹⁵. It was implemented in cooperation with the state, signatory cities, the church and NGOs. Partner organisations in the project were the National Workshop Association¹⁶ which was responsible for implementing "a Start for better life" project in five cities, local youth housing associations in signatory cities and Ässäkodit in Hervanta¹⁷.

The basic starting point in the project was the Housing First principle. On this basis a comprehensive project was planned covering different fields of life and supporting social integration. The purpose was to create and root new diversified work models to prevent homelessness and exclusion, to increase the volume of services provided for young people and to bring up and spread innovations and good practice. Quantitative targets were to get 600 new dwellings and services for 500 young people. These targets were reached.

The primary target groups in the umbrella project were the actors taking part in subprojects. Also other bodies working with homeless youth were beneficiaries. Target groups in the subprojects were young people (16-25 years old) who needed support in starting independent living or who already had experienced a crisis situation in housing.

The targets were strived at by creating national and regional networks. Multidisciplinary cooperation was started, established and spread. Good practices developed in cities were described and disseminated during the project. Measures used were amongst others describing development processes and modelling housing pathways. Raising awareness of youth homelessness, influencing on possibilities in construction and bringing up preventive work were also means used in the project to prevent youth homeless. New ways to cooperate were piloted both on the national and regional level and good practices were disseminated in national networks.

The amount of investment subsidies for constructing youth housing granted by ARA was 2 691 401 € and by RAY 4 926 000 €. With funding from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health new staff for supported housing was hired matching about 10 man-years.

The next table includes all youth housing dwellings constructed or under construction in the signatory cities. It includes also dwellings which have been planned during years 2009-2011. The year of completion or the estimated completion is in brackets.

¹⁵ <https://www.nal.fi/en/front+page/>

¹⁶ http://www.tpy.fi/in_english/

¹⁷ A project of S-Asunnot Oy, a non-profit real estate company owned by the Finnish Federation of Settlement Houses and the Kalliola Settlement.

Housing production during the project	Helsinki	Espoo	Vantaa	Tampere	Joensuu	Jyväskylä	Oulu	Kuopio	Lahti	Turku	Total
Completed	65 (2011)	46 (2009) 53 (2010)	46 (2009) 48 (2010)	25 (2009)	27 (2009)		154			23 (2010)	487
Under construction	118 (2012)					12 (2012)					130
Construction is starting	21 (2012) 26 (2012)	70									117
In planning					39						39
Total	230	169	94	25	66	12	154			23	773

The versatile and wide networking activities in the project are described in more detail on the homepage of the Youth Housing Association: www.nal.fi.

2.11.2 National guidance and development of housing advisory services

ARA has granted signatory cities 320 536 € funds from the development program for suburban areas for hiring housing advisors. This funding has helped to hire 12 housing advisers. In addition two researchers have been hired in a pilot project on housing security centre in Helsinki with ARA funding until the end of 2011. A research project on the economic effectiveness of housing advisory services has also been funded by ARA.

The housing advisory forum led by ARA has had 7 meetings. The forum worked to establish housing advisory services. The government housing policy program agreed in 2012 suggest that 0.6M € state subsidies are annually granted for housing advisory services.

Effectiveness of housing advisory services

There is solid evidence based both on experience as well as research on the effectiveness of housing advisory services. In Helsinki there is one leading housing advisor and 14 housing advisors at the moment. In a two year period 148 eviction processes already in court have been cancelled by the work of housing advisors. In addition 3682 schemes of payment or management plans were made. According to the estimate made by cooperating real estate companies housing advisory services can reduce evictions by 30 - 50 %. A research on effectiveness of housing advisory services by Kaupunkitutkimus Oy Seppo Laakso (Kostiainen & Laakso)¹⁸ showed that the service decreased evictions by 32 % during years 2001 - 2008. Experiences from other cities investing in housing advice have followed the same line. According to the report from Kaupunkitutkimus housing advice brings remarkable savings to public finance and national economy by reducing evictions: the benefits exceed the costs of the service. According to the report the work of one housing advisor produces 43 000 - 85 000 € savings to the public finance. It has been estimated that cancellation of 148 evictions has caused over 6M € savings in public finances.

¹⁸ http://www.kaupunkitutkimusta.fi/kaupunkitutkimus/fi_FI/inenglish/

3 Other measures in the programme

3.1 Housing scheme competition

The winning proposal Keidas (Oasis) in the housing scheme competition in Tampere was constructed and taken into use in 2011. The service provider in this 30-home unit is AlfaKuntoutus Hervanta Oy.

In Helsinki the winner of the competition was Rafael, the proposal of the Helsinki Deaconess Institute. Estimated time of completion is 2013.

In Espoo there were no proposals in the competition.

3.2 Communication

All project partners essential in communications have been represented in the communication team led by the Ministry of Environment. The Ministry and ARA are responsible for the general information in the programme. Signatory partners are on their part responsible for informing about local projects. NGOs have informed about their projects. A brochure has been made on the programme and special webpages have been opened on the ARA website. Also the website www.asuntoensin.fi of the Nimi Ovesa –project has been used in communication. The www.housingfist.fi –website has also sparked a lot of attention abroad. The programme to reduce homelessness has got both locally and nationally a lot of positive publicity. This has for the most part been due to open and active communication by the local project partners and cities.

3.3. Improving Participation

Vailla vakinaista asuntoa ry (No fixed abode NGO)¹⁹ took part in the steering group of the programme to reduce homelessness in 2008 -2011. The NGO was founded in 1986 to promote abandoning dormitory accommodation and to improve everyone's possibility to independent living. This is why taking part in the steering group has been especially important for the association. The national lobby for homeless people brought to the group a person who has experienced homelessness in order to guarantee the participation of the target group and to bring the group updated information from grass roots level. In 2010 - 2012 the association took part in a joint development project Nimi Ovesa together with Tekes, four cities and NGOs. The association was responsible for guaranteeing the participation of service users in planning the services. Vailla vakinaista asuntoa ry has been a full member of FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless since 1998. The association has spread knowledge about progress in the programme in Feantsa working groups and seminars.

4 Main results in the signatory cities

4.1 Helsinki

In Helsinki the targets set in the letter of intent have been exceeded when the projects in the program, dwellings bought for the target group and housing from the social rental housing stock are included. Altogether 832 dwellings were allocated for long-term homeless people. The target is exceeded by 82 dwellings. As part of the programme 8 separate supported housing units have been opened. The largest is Aurora-house with 125 dwellings and the smallest is Rukkila housing unit with 21 dwellings. The Hietaniemi service centre for homeless people has been financed by the city.

¹⁹ <http://www.vvary.fi/>

Special emphasis in building new supported housing units has been in the location, open communication and cooperation with the neighbourhood and neighbourhood associations. Neighbourhood work is carried out by housing units to minimize eventual disturbance.

The largest structural change visible also on the streets has been the decrease in temporary hostel housing. At the moment there are only 144 beds in hostels and 80 beds in emergency in Helsinki. Functional alterations have also been planned in the rest of the hostels: they are replaced by supported housing units. According to the plans living in shelters will be completely over in Helsinki in 2013.

Youth homelessness has been prevented together with the Helsinki city real estate department. Supported housing for youth in child protection after care and rehabilitative accommodation for youth in foster care has been increased. In supported and rehabilitative housing young people also have social support in housing and starting independent living.

City social services and Nal-Palvelut Oy, a company providing supported housing owned by the Youth Housing Association, have started to cooperate in developing successful pathways to housing for the target group. The city social services have purchased supported housing services for young people in discretionary after care. As a joint effort the work process in supported housing has been described. A guidance group of senior social workers has been gathered for the development work. In this way it has been possible to prevent homelessness and offer support for some 45 young people. At the same time this has been a part of the structural change in child protection: offering supported housing instead of a heavier measure, institutional care.

Furthermore in cooperation between Youth Housing Association and Startti parempaan elämään (“Start for a better life”) project by the National Workshop Association over 40 excluded or young people in danger of being excluded have been supported from homelessness to inclusion. Especially Vamos-work started by the Helsinki Deaconess Institute (in which also the Startti project works) has been in close cooperation to arrange housing for these young people together with the local youth housing association Nasta ry, Alkuasunnot Oy (real estate company owned by Youth Housing Association)²⁰ and Nuorisosäätiö (“Youth Housing Foundation”)²¹.

Housing advisory services were started as a permanent work model in Helsinki city social services in 2006. There were five housing advisers working in municipal real estate companies. The work was extended in 2009 when social services hired seven new housing advisers and a leading housing adviser. Three new housing advisers were hired in 2011. Now there is one leading housing adviser and 14 housing advisers in Helsinki.

Special features and needs of different residential areas have been taken into account in developing the service. Thus it has been possible to create functional local working models. Regardless of the work model, housing advisory services have been able to prevent evictions and homelessness. This has brought savings for the tenant, social services and real estate companies.

The amount of long-term homeless people has clearly decreased due to the measures in the programme. At the end of 2011 there were 1240 long-term homeless people in Helsinki whereas in 2008 the estimate was 1591. At the same time the number of single homeless people has increased to some extent, in 2011 there were 3400 single homeless people and in 2008 the number was 3150. Temporary and recurrent homelessness has increased which increases the risk of long-term homelessness. Apparent reasons for this development are the worsening economic situation, the development of rental housing markets and migration to the metropolitan area. It is clearly visible that among homeless people there are more and more people whose only problem is the lack of an affordable rental dwelling. 2500 single homeless people live temporarily with relatives or friends or move from one flat to another. It has been estimated that 700 of them are long-term homeless. Most homeless people without any special support needs are in this group. Also the number of young people under 25 years and people with immigrant background has increased in the group of long-term homeless people.

²⁰ <http://www.alkuasunnot.fi/english.html>

²¹ http://www.nuorisosaatio.fi/in_english

Difficult groups to house are mental health clients with a negative attitude towards treatment and people suffering from different kinds of behavioural disorders and hence adapting poorly to housing communities.

The highest demand is still in supported housing services for middle aged clients suffering from intoxicant abuse problems and in small-sized scattered housing for people who can live relatively independently.

4.2 Espoo

During the programme period 192 new dwellings have been completed for homeless people in Espoo. The extension of Olarinluoma reception home with 38 dwellings was also completed at the beginning of February in 2012. Espoo exceeded the quantitative target of 125 flats mentioned in the letter of intent by 105 dwellings.

The conversion of Väinölä-koti shelter into a supported housing unit has been postponed to the next programme period.

Besides this the city of Espoo has directed three building sites to the real estate company of Youth Housing Association for constructing youth housing. The houses in Saunalahti (46 flats) and Tillinmäki (53 flats) are completed during the program period and Helmiöllönmäki is in planning. Espoo has also developed a supported housing work model funded with the financing from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

In Espoo the treatment and service system for people suffering from mental health and substance abuse problems has been developed in community care direction since the mid of 2000s. For example in rehabilitative addiction treatment bed-days in institutional care have decreased from 20 000 days in 2008 to 9400 days in 2011. The first programme to reduce long-term homelessness has contributed in reaching this target.

Along with the implementation of the programme the housing situation of homeless people with substance abuse problems, earlier regarded as difficult to house, has improved in Espoo. There is now available supported housing, intensively supported housing and (intensive) service housing as purchased service in the Kuninkaankallio unit by the Helsinki Deaconess Institute and the city arranges supported housing and (intensive) service housing in Olarinluoma service centre. Renovation in the Olarinluoma reception home was completed in summer 2012. Developing personal needs assessment for the homeless will be continued in cooperation between mental health and substance abuse treatment services and social services during autumn 2012.

A written recommendation on shared practices in eviction cases has been made and delivered in joint workshops of the city real estate company Espoonkruunu Oy, social services and mental health and systems abuse treatment services.

4.3 Vantaa

In Vantaa 118 dwellings were constructed during the programme period. The target was 125 dwellings. Two supported housing projects (Osmankäämintie and Pähkinärinne) planned in this programme were transferred to year 2012. There will be altogether 88 flats in these two projects. The delay was, among other things, due to changes in city planning.

Viidakkokuja supported housing unit is targeted for people suffering from mental health problems and it is situated in Asola in Vantaa. The house was completed in March 2010. There are 22 dwellings, two of them are for emergency situations. The tenants live independently in their own two-room flats and get guidance and support from the staff. The purpose of the emergency housing is to provide a safe and temporary transitional period for example when moving to independent housing or when assessment is needed of the situation. Six support workers work in Viidakkokuja in two shifts seven days a week. During night time the tenants can call an emergency number.

Tähkä is a congregate housing unit with 15 flats and it suits best for people who benefit from a community and peer support in strengthening their temperate lifestyle. Tenants are responsible for daily life activities such as cooking, laundry and basic daily routines. Living here is temporary and lasts for about one year. Target is to find every tenant a permanent and appropriate housing solution after Tähkä. The dwellings are small furnished one-room flats. The tenants pay rent and a client fee.

Simonpirtti is situated in Simonkylä area in Vantaa. There are 24 rooms for permanent housing and 2 beds for temporary stay. In permanent housing the tenants have single rooms with a bathroom and toilet. One double room is reserved for temporary housing. Short-term housing can be offered for people who are in danger of losing their home because of substance abuse and who for health reasons can't use services in institutional rehabilitation for intoxicant abusers.

Simonpirtti does not require abstinence before living there but using intoxicants is not allowed during the stay. Round the clock service. Tenants sign the lease directly with the service provider Ratamokoti Oy. The tenants pay the rent and a client fee depending on their income.

To prevent youth homelessness a project financed by the church was started with Laurinkoti in Vantaa to find housing pathways for people living in Laurinkoti. It is possible to live in supported housing in Laurinkoti for the maximum period of two years (the city buys services for a two-year period per tenant) and after this another housing pathway must be found.

In Omat ovet ("doors of our own") project in Vantaa the target was to create housing pathways for people suffering from mental health problems. The project has gathered a multi professional working group on homeless outreach work representing various sectors in welfare services. The target of the group is to monitor homelessness in Vantaa, to become acquainted, to network and to keep the parties updated in matters concerning homelessness. The role of outreach work will be emphasized when the housing planned in the programme will be constructed in Vantaa.

According to the situation in November 2011 the number of single homeless people has remained almost unchanged in Vantaa during the programme period. The number of people sleeping rough or in overnight shelters, in institutions or in homes for alcoholics increased compared to the previous year. Also the housing situation of people released from prison worsened. The largest group of homeless were people living with relatives or friends like in Helsinki, too. Their number was 28 smaller than in the year before. The number of homeless women and young people under 25 years increased significantly. There were 113 homeless women and 77 homeless young people more than in 2010. It is surprising that according to the report there were no homeless immigrants in Vantaa since one year earlier 40 of the homeless were immigrants. 142 people were housed by the Vantaa city social services or city housing department. 50 of them were long-term homeless people.

4.4 Tampere

In Tampere the letter of intent included five projects and three of them were started in 2009. There are 148 dwellings in these completed projects.

Härmälä supported housing unit is targeted for long-term homeless people who are difficult to house because of substance abuse or mental health problems. The approach is rehabilitative, resource oriented, solution focused and counselling. Abstinence is not required. Aim in the work is rehabilitation to independent living.

To enable the project TVA Oy²² renovated 22 rental flats. The Tampere A-kilta²³ rented the flats from TVA Oy and made leases with the tenants. The flats are 37.5 m² in size.

²² A city owned real estate company.

²³ "A-guild", association founded by people recovering from substance abuse problems.

Most of the tenants moving in have brought with them only a few plastic bags containing all their possessions. Building a home with all its accessories has started from the very beginning with the help of a support worker of one's own. The daily support has included cooking, shopping, cleaning together and guidance in personal hygiene. Support has been needed regularly also in running errands in offices.

The most challenging part of the work has been to arrange necessary treatment for clients suffering from mental health problems. The work orientation has proven its effectiveness during the program period: a pathway from supported housing to independent rental housing has successfully been created for people difficult to house and many people are able to keep their homes with the support they receive.

Construction of the project Hervannan Ässäkodit²⁴ was completed in December 2009. It includes 20 dwellings for people under 29 years and 5 dwellings for people recovering from intoxicant abuse or mental health problems. Tenants in supported housing can have substance abuse or mental health problems and criminal backgrounds. They are selected by city social services. The length of the stay has varied from two months to 18 months. There have been 50 clients in the service. The work model has been described together with the service provider Sinivida as part of the project of Youth Housing Association.

Tampere buys heavily supported housing also from Tiitu, a project of the youth housing association in Tampere district. Tiitu, Hervannan Ässäkodit project and the Startti-training of the youth workshop of Siltavalmennus²⁵ have been in close cooperation to build housing pathways for young people.

The Oma ovi ("Door of one's own") project by Siltavalmennus was started in March 2009. Its target was to offer housing for homeless people released from prison and the clients of probation and aftercare services. Targets in supported housing were also harm reduction in intoxicant abuse and to decrease recidivism.

A housing solution was found or 66 % of 70 clients during their stay in the project. Almost all who didn't find a pathway forward disappeared from the service. Little less than one third (28 %) moved either to supported housing or in a rental flat of their own.

Experiences from the project can be summarized as follows: homeless ex-criminals are a miscellaneous group. The needs and abilities in housing and in support services vary considerably. Typical for them is a "back and forth"-kind of life style where one goes forward, drops down and rises up and tries again. It is very challenging for the service system to respond to changes of this kind. The project tried to overcome this with a holding grip and a low threshold.

Pirkanmaan Sininauha ry²⁶ started its work in Hervanta Sininauhakodit in February 2011. Target group is homeless people suffering from substance abuse and mental health problems. They are offered rehabilitative housing services in sixteen supported flats (service housing) and in sixteen intensively supported flats (intensive service housing). The homes are furnished and abstinence is required. The flats are situated in the same building in two floors and both have a staff of their own.

Alfakuntoutus started its activities in temporary premises in Pohjolankatu (near the Tampere city centre) and moved in June to the present, new premises in Väkipyöränkatu in Hervanta area. The supported housing unit includes 30 one room flats in terraced house. The flats are furnished and abstinence is required. Target group in this supported housing unit is long-term homeless people suffering from substance abuse and mental health problems.

According to a report from the city housing department there were 351 single homeless people in Tampere in November 2011. The figure is the lowest in 2000s. Also the target to halve long-term homelessness has been reached. In 2011 there were 96 single long-term homeless people in Tampere. The number has been decreasing every year since 2008 when it was 214. In 2009 the number was 155 and in 2010 it was 124. During the programme period long-term homelessness has decreased by 55 %.

²⁴ A project of S-Asunnot Oy, a non-profit real estate company owned by the Finnish Federation of Settlement Houses and the Kalliola Settlement.

²⁵ <http://www.siltavalmennus.fi/index.php/tutustu-siltaan/briefly-in-english>

²⁶ NGO, a member of the umbrella organization Finnish Blue Ribbon (international Blue Cross).

4.5 Turku

In Turku the implementation of the programme was started in two different ways. Housing advice services were extended and made permanent. In this way it has been possible to prevent evictions and homelessness. Another way to take part in the programme has been the implementation of TALK project. The city owned real estate company TVT Asunnot Oy and the city social and health services provided 60 flats for supported housing for people suffering from intoxicant abuse problems. The flats are in scattered housing in city owned housing stock in different parts of Turku. The support has been provided by city housing services for intoxicant abusers. At the beginning of 2012 the work model was made a permanent part of social services in the city organization.

The TALK project was started in October 2009. The number of flats and support workers increased step by step so that at the end there were five support workers in the project. All clients had experienced long-term homelessness. The leases have been signed by the tenants themselves for a fixed term. Secondary leasing was not used. The tenants were selected from people in round-the-clock supervised housing services or from rehabilitation for intoxicant abusers. Support was tailored according to individual life situations and personal targets. Cooperation has been intense with authorities and the personal networks of the tenants. A service plan made by the client and a social worker together has been the basis in the work.

When necessary the tenants have been directed to detox or to interval periods in other housing services or rehabilitation. Success in housing depends on improvement in life skills and life control. Results of the work are encouraging. When things go well the support service can be ended and the tenant can carry on living in the same dwelling. The real estate company then gives another flat to supported housing services for a new tenant. During the project period there were less ended tenancies than tenancies in which support could be ended. Housing has been more successful than what was predicted in advance.

The main problems in housing have been earlier debts to the real estate company. There are often evictions and liabilities for damages from previous tenancies behind long-term homelessness. Negotiations between social and health services and the real estate company haven't led to any permanent and clear solutions in these problems. According to the annual housing market survey by ARA homelessness has decreased by one third due to the increase in supported housing. Also in other respects the service structure has been developed in favour of supported housing. By a tendering process more and more support services are purchased also from private service providers. In the service provision owned by the city there is a shift from half-way house type of housing towards small scale housing groups. In this way it has been possible to house more and more people in an appropriate way. The target is to arrange housing services in a way that promotes person's independence and autonomy.

4.6 Lahti

In Lahti altogether 61 flats have been taken into use for long-term homeless people during the program in three different projects (Puntari service housing 27 flats, Nikula supported housing unit 23 flats and Leasing 11 flats). Housing has also been provided by Y-Foundation, the city real estate company Lahden talot and other sources. Y-Foundation has during 2009-2011 provided 19 flats, Lahden talot and others 8 flats, 27 in total.

Homeless people enter the project and supported housing from social services. Housing process starts from an application to supported housing. Social worker meets the client and makes an assessment of the situation at hand. Also the expertise of the network and partners of the client are used when necessary. The project workers also interview the client before the decision is made whenever it is possible. Already at this stage the target is to promote commitment to support and inform about rules and the approach. The interview will be carried out in the applied unit but it can be also done in a hospital, rehabilitation institution or by using a live video feed in prison. Also a contact person from these bodies takes part in network meetings. A form of daily skills and needs of support is the basis for the discussion (health, systems abuse, household management skills, handling errands, and the need for support). The target is to find a suitable housing solution with appropriate support.

The decision about the housing solution is made in a housing team which meets once a month. Also the support calls are planned at the same time. In a crisis situation supported housing can be granted also without a team meeting.

Supported housing granted by social and health services is offered in flats leased as secondary leasing. Other options are supported housing in Nikula or Puntari units and flats in Laune special housing since November 2011. There are onsite support workers on the premises. In Nikula the staff is on site at 7-22. Control is strict for example of systems abuse. In addition scattered housing is available with support workers making house calls according to the needs of the tenants.

The selection criteria for housing are homelessness or a threat to end up homeless or the difficulty to get housing from non-profit or general housing markets. In Puntari a special criteria is the minimum age of 55 years or decreased ability to function. In Puntari living is more permanent than in other forms of supported housing. In other options the target is to move the general housing markets.

With the help of the work model developed in the project it has been possible to house people who without support could not get a home in scattered housing or in other independent housing. The work model allows making quick interventions when necessary and in many cases evictions and other problems have been avoided and the life control and health of the clients has improved. Networking with partners is more extensive and the network is larger.

Long-term homeless has clearly decreased in Lahti even though the target to halve it was not reached (2011: 78, 2008: 108). Decrease in the number of single homeless people is in practice due to the measures in the programme. By the use of new supported housing units most hostel beds have been abandoned.

Lahti has developed a form of assessment (ITE) which will be used in the whole programme in the future.

4.7 Joensuu

In Joensuu the number of long-term homeless people has decreased during the programme. In November 2011 there were 100 single homeless people in Joensuu. 17 of them were long-term homeless. In 2008 the number of long-term homeless was 85.

In addition to the new actions started in the project the city has a social worker for homeless people taking care of service counselling. In Utra rehabilitation unit by Sovatek Foundation there is a social worker helping the clients in the services and cooperating with the social worker for the homeless. The social worker for homeless cooperates also with the city real estate company Joensuun Kodit Oy to arrange housing and prevent evictions. These measures have contributed to the decrease in homelessness figures.

By the construction of a communal housing unit Jokikievari for young people suffering from mental health problems it has been possible to create a pathway to supported housing. There are 17 flats in the house and 6 support workers. The tenants are selected in a joint team with the city mental health services. The first lease is for a fixed term of four weeks. After that the lease is made for a non-fixed term. The workers contact the tenant at least three times a week, preferably every day. Jokikievari is an interphase after which the target is to move to independent housing.

During year 2011 altogether 12 people have moved from Jokikievari to more independent living. To find individual pathways to rehabilitation a network of contact persons has been created with mental health services, child welfare, social services for adults, social services in rural areas and the Sovatek Foundation. Regular meetings and goal oriented cooperation have been agreed on with the network. Also of a more intensive cooperation with rehabilitative work services has been agreed on. The work model is developed and evaluated in regular network meetings.

Supported housing for people suffering from substance abuse problems was started in the city owned Utra rehabilitation centre. At the beginning of year 2011 the activities were transferred to Sovatek Foundation.

Because of room arrangements the work has been developed towards rehabilitating daytime activities. It is out-patient rehabilitation for intoxicant abusers and it is carried out as four week courses.

Daytime rehabilitation fits for clients who strive at intoxicant free life and need support and means in life control and independent living. The rehabilitation is based on group work by community training methods on 5 days a week. Experiences from day time rehabilitation are rewarding, the client's skills to cope in daily life and independent living have improved. There have been 15 clients in the rehabilitation. One place in housing rehabilitation has been in a three room flat rented from the city real estate company.

4.8 Jyväskylä

When the first phase of the programme to reduce long-term homelessness was started in 2008 there were 80 long-term homeless people in Jyväskylä. When the project ended in 2011 the city had managed to halve long-term homelessness and the number was 38.

The target of the city was to arrange housing for 30 long-term homeless people during 2009 – 2011. During the project Jyväskylä Street Mission renovated 25 flats for the target group. 13 flats by the local Youth Housing Association are completed during summer 2012. The project in the programme was transferred from Korpilahti to Säynätsalo. Viertola (in Sorvaajantie 2) will be completed in 2012. State funding will be applied for two workers.

The Jyväskylä Street Mission planned to renovate 12 flats in Kalliomäki and 5 flats in Etappi for young long-term homeless people. The target was exceeded as 13 more flats were renovated for this group. 5 one-room flats were completed in Vanhatie 13 and one two-room flat was bought in Pupuhdantie 14. In Kalliomäki 6 flats were completed. Three support workers hired with state funding have been working in Kalliomäki and in Etappi.

The city of Jyväskylä hired a housing adviser together with city real estate companies for the period 2009 – 2011. During the project the housing adviser had 689 customers. The adviser had 659 negotiations by phone with customers, there were 292 customer visits in the office and 430 statements were written about client's situation mainly for the landlord. The number of clients has been rising every year (2009 it was 71, 2010: 243 and 2011: 375). The housing adviser worked in close cooperation with landlords and authorities, made house calls and took part in network meetings.

The city social services for adults started a social housing management pilot project (Asu lte) for the period 2010 – 2011. By this work about ten clients at a time are supported to independent living. An evaluation group selects the clients. The evaluation group has met about once a month. In 2010 altogether 14 contracts were made for this social house management and 4 contracts were ended. In 2011 altogether 12 contracts were made and 15 ended. The service was a success because only one lease was not continued after the social house management service.

The Oma koti project (home of one's own) by Criminal Sanctions Agency arranged support for people released from prison or in probation aftercare services in 2010 together with the Martha Organization²⁷ in Central Finland, The Jyväskylä Street Mission and The Finnish Central Association for Mental Health²⁸. In 2011 the Criminal Sanctions Agency bought housing advisory services (one person) from the city. In 2011 8 contracts on social house management service were made for this target group.

4.9 Kuopio

In Kuopio special efforts were made during the programme to improve preventive measures, to improve services for homeless people and to build new housing for long-term homeless people. The programme inspired local authorities, landlords and service providers (mainly NGOs) to join resources to prevent homelessness (in the limits allowed by competition regulations).

²⁷ The Martha Organization is a Finnish home economics organization <http://www.martat.fi/info/in-english/>

²⁸ http://www.mtkl.fi/in_english/

According to the letter of intent in Kuopio the Työterapinen yhdistys NGO (“Work therapy association”) built a new service centre Patakukkula with ARA investment subsidy. This unit replaced the old overnight shelter and a homeless duty with 8 beds, rooms for a new start and 20 new one-room flats in a terraced house were built.

In 2011 there have been 62 different clients in the terraced housing in Patakukkula. 39 tenants have moved away during the year. 25 of them got a normal rental flat. In duty service there have been 117 different clients in 2011. 48 of them have moved to an assessment period. From all 52 people in assessment 35 people have moved to flats in terraced housing.

A project funded by ESF (“Atte” project, supported housing as a means to improve employment) prevented homelessness by offering help in disturbance and rent arrears reported by real estate companies. Three support workers and a project manager worked in the project from the beginning of July 2009 until the end of August in 2012. There were about 350 clients in the project in Kuopio. A new work model has been created by the project to help social workers. During the project for example evictions in the city real estate company (Niiralan Kulma Oy) have decreased at best by one half: from 91 in 2009 to 49 in 2009. In 2011 there have been 63 evictions and 22 of them were caused by disturbance. Evictions caused by rent arrears have increased in 2011.

The Oma koti (“Home of one’s own”) project by the Criminal Sanctions Agency cooperated with various NGOs and gathered information about the services. The activities of the Kuopio housing working group for people released from prison were developed further and described. Also a pilot working group was formed for young people with housing problems in community sanctions. By the help of the working group 75 % of them were housed in social housing by the city in 2011. 85 % of them succeeded and living in normal rental flats continued after one year.

TTY-asunnot Oy²⁹ renovated with the help of ARA funding and interest subsidy loan old flats (14) in terraced houses in Patakukkula. Sirkkulanpuiston toimintayhdistys ry³⁰ renovated 10 flats in Likolahti congregate housing with ARA funding and interest subsidy loan. TTY-asunnot Oy also got an investment reservation for ARA investment funds to build 45 dwellings in Inkilänmäki. Building work was started in 2012 and is estimated to be completed in 2013.

In spite of the measures the number of long-term homeless people has increased in Kuopio (2011: 55, 2008: 33) and also homelessness in general has been increasing (single homeless in 2011: 220, in 2008: 186).

4.10 Oulu

In the city of Oulu the target during the program period 2009 -2011 was to respond to the housing needs of young homeless people with multiple problems and to develop for them an intensive supported housing and rehabilitation service model in cooperation with local NGOs. This target was also reached: altogether 40 young people were housed during the program period. At the end of 2011 18 % (7 young people) of those housed had moved to independent housing. 10 are still homeless. It has been discovered that the work model developed in the project with intensive support in housing and intensive rehabilitation for young homeless people with multiple problems (often using drugs) is very effective for a part of young people who have been housed. About 60 – 70 % of the young people housed have been attached to housing and rehabilitation whereas in rehabilitation for intoxicant abusers the percentage of succeeding is less than ten per cent according to research. A part of young people in the project have already moved to independent housing and studying or labour markets.

It was not until August 2011 that the project for homeless women was started by two counsellors hired in the project. At the turn of the year 2012 there were about 20 – 25 women housed. Homeless women are

²⁹ Real estate company of the Työterapinen yhdistys NGO (“Work therapy association”)

³⁰ NGO providing housing services for special groups in Kuopio

directed to the service from services for intoxicant abusers, from psychiatric wards or from temporary accommodation. Women get help in finding a home from normal rental housing and they are given intensive support in housing and rehabilitation in different fields of life including also possibilities to education and work.

In 2011 there were 40 single homeless in Oulu, 31 of them were long-term homeless people. The number of long-term homeless people has decreased (50 in 2008) but relatively clearly less than the number of all single homeless people (112 in 2008).

5 Evaluation and conclusions for the programme period 2012 – 2015

5.1 Housing First principle in Finland

The Housing First principle originating from New York has during the past years sparked great interest all over the world and many pilot projects based on it have been started in different countries. The Finnish program to reduce homelessness has been regarded as the most interesting in international research since the principle is applied on a programme level and the programme connects different versions of the Housing First principle. There are features of the “orthodox” Pathways to housing model, communal Housing First model and Housing First in scattered housing with lighter support.

On the basis of the experience during the programme period it is possible to crystallize the main elements in the Finnish Housing First model. The main ethical starting point in the program was **regarding a home as a basic human right**. A home of one’s own offers enough privacy and **possibilities to tackle other social and health problems**. According to this starting point the target has been to create **permanent solutions** in housing for long-term homeless people. Thus housing arrangements must in the first place be based on a normal lease for a non-fixed term and there are no special preconditions in getting a home, for example, concerning intoxicant use. Minimum requirements for housing have been the standards made by ARA. All above mentioned key elements reduce the inequality of long-term homeless people compared to the population in general.

Emphasising permanent solutions has also meant an effort to get rid of temporary shelter type of accommodation which keeps up homelessness culture. In capital city region the progress in this conversion has been rapid and in practice hostel type of accommodation will end in Helsinki during 2013. Yet in many cities there are still versatile solutions in temporary housing and also overnight shelters which do not match contemporary requirements for emergency housing.

One special feature in the Finnish model has been supported housing units which have partly replaced hostels. Only former homeless people live in these units. In some estimates units of this kind have been regarded as problematic concentrations. The units have, however, clearly proved their necessity and they complement available housing options. It has been possible to target and tailor more intensive support for those who need it and at the same time utilize staff resources in a flexible way as the needs change. Living in a unit seems to fit especially for those former homeless people who fear loneliness and the risk of isolation in scattered housing. It is clear that larger units face also challenges which are connected in developing the community and in using intoxicants. The experience so far has showed that establishing common rules in housing takes its time. It is possible, however, to get things running smoothly in congregate housing by improving support work.

The projects and units implemented in the programme have considerably increased the selection of services in the signatory cities. There are now real options available to arrange housing and build realistic pathways in housing for long-term homeless people. The new housing units are in the first place intended for permanent housing. In many cities they are however filling gaps in the service system and the nature of the activity is more like temporary rehabilitative housing with the goal to move on to independent housing.

The essential point is that also in these units the length of the stay depends on support needs and it can also be of permanent nature like the lease, too.

The target of the programme to reduce homelessness has been to find solutions matching local needs. In this respect the expertise and experience of people working in cities and local NGOs has been in key position. This is why housing units requiring abstinence still have an important role in the local service system and this wish comes clearly also from the clients/tenants. This has become apparent by strengthening participation and listening to the service users in many connections and working groups.

During the next programme period the focus is shifting towards lighter support and scattered housing. Main challenges for the programme period are connected on the one hand to developing rehabilitation for intoxicant abusers, how communities are developed in supported housing units and how human resources in the community are utilized in rehabilitation and what kind of work orientation is used to support and motivate people to reduce and end intoxicant abuse in an environment where the use is allowed. On the other hand the challenge is to secure sufficient and well-timed support in scattered housing, how to access services when necessary and how to support integration in a community. Especially challenging is the sufficient supply of housing stock also in scattered housing to enable individual housing pathways.

The starting point in the Finnish Housing First thinking has been that there is not a one and only right concept of Housing First but the principles must be adapted to local needs and circumstances. On this basis and along these principles the service system and housing options will be developed also in the future. The target is to end long-term homelessness and reduce temporary homeless considerably.

5.2 The tenant turnover

The tenant turnover is a factor describing success in housing in the best way. There is no general information available about all projects in the programme and all details are not commensurable because of differences in the projects but it is possible, however, to draw some conclusions. Comparisons can be made with American research which has reported success rates of 80 % or even more in Housing First projects when the permanence of housing has been evaluated one year and two years after the housing has started. In the original New York model maximum time in support is two years. In the **Finnish** model this kind of time limit has not been set.

Units started during the programme period have been functioning very different time periods which makes comparisons difficult. In many new units the permanence is almost 90 % which means that the tenancy has ended unsuccessfully only in 10 % of the cases. As such there is natural turnover in the units because of changes in life situations (e.g. moving to a rental flat of one's own). For example in 2011 in Helsinki 37 % of all housed in the units had moved away. The information available shows no significant difference in permanence between scattered housing and congregate housing. Information gathered by the "Nimi Ovesa" project suggests that there is a clearer difference between units requiring abstinence and units allowing substance use. Failures are more common when abstinence is required. Most challenging groups when permanence is considered are people released from prison and young people.

5.3 Production of rental housing

The targets have been reached most successfully in Tampere where also homelessness in general has almost been halved. This example shows clearly the connection between long-term homelessness and the general housing market situation in rental housing and constructing rental housing. Production of rental housing has remained on a reasonable level in Tampere throughout the programme period. In proportion with the number of inhabitants, new ARA financed rental housing construction has been highest in Tampere. In most signatory cities more housing has been constructed for special groups (students, elderly people, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, long-term homeless) than for normal rental housing.

It is also noteworthy that according to ARA statistics 1169 (53 %) of long-term homeless people in signatory cities belonged to the group living temporarily with relatives and friends. Information about the living conditions and support needs of people in this group is insufficient but it can be estimated that many people belonging in this group need only a dwelling.

The final column in the table anticipates the amount of long-term homeless people at the end of 2012 when the final projects now under construction will be completed. According to the estimate housing is needed for 1765 long-term homeless people. Realism in the target to end long-term homelessness can be estimated by comparing this figure with the target numbers given by cities in new letters of intent.

The statistics of the programme period show clearly that the lack of affordable rental housing causes fluctuation from homelessness to long-term homelessness. It is obvious that the target to end long-term homelessness is not realistic unless its targets are not supported by a more effective use of present rental housing stock and by such measures in general housing policy which guarantee a sufficient provision of affordable rental housing.

Juha Kaakinen
Programme leader