

## EUROPEAN ACADEMY ON YOUTH WORK - WORKSHOP REPORT

### The Youth Shelters, The Pathway Home, Red Cross, Finland

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#### TOPIC DISCUSSED



The workshop included an overview of the issue of homelessness and the services for young adults in Finland and an introduction to the discussion about these phenomena at European level. The Red Cross services of the Youth Shelters and the Pathway Home represent projects that offer one solution to making growing up and gaining independence, and thus becoming autonomous members of society easier for these young adults.

The situation of young adults in the capital region of Finland is becoming more and more challenging because of the high standards of the society, the high level of renting costs, broken families and a challenging work situation. This is highlighted in the capital region when compared to the rest of Finland. It is also shown by the statistics: for example, almost one out of three young adults in Finland would prefer to live in the capital region, and young adults under 25 years of age are the only group in which the share of homelessness is increasing.

The society and welfare service system pose some challenges as well: services are hard to understand and not flexible enough for a growing number of young adults. The overall approach is not holistic enough to serve the purpose: to help the young person to become truly independent and self-sufficient.

In this context, the Youth Shelter services and the Pathway Home offer personal and low threshold support for youth and their families or other peers. The support model helps young adults to build their own independent way of living and find their full potential. Work is based on the dialogic method, where the young person is the main actor and solutions will be found together between the young adult, their family / peers, a volunteer and a professional. One of the main goals of the work is to decrease youth homelessness in Finland, especially in the capital region. In practice, for young adults this means smoother paths to finding their own home.

*We help young people to find a home, manage their financial issues and receive the services and benefits they need. The main task is to help the young person to feel important, respected and needed.*

## METHODOLOGY

The workshop was a combination of frontal lecture, discussion, participatory and interactive work with the participants, including a video and other materials.

## KEY ISSUES RAISED SUCH AS CHALLENGES

Discussion about youth housing: how is the Housing First model ([http://www.housingfirst.fi/en/housing\\_first](http://www.housingfirst.fi/en/housing_first)) implemented when housing is not an automatic possibility for youth in the service? The Housing First model is a homeless assistance approach that prioritises the provision of permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness, thus ending their homelessness and serving as a platform from which they can pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life. This approach is guided by the belief that people need basic necessities like food and a place to live before attending to anything less critical, such as getting a job, budgeting properly, or attending to substance use issues. The Housing First philosophy relies on four principles:

1. Housing enables independent lives
2. Respect of choice
3. Rehabilitation and empowerment of the resident
4. Integration into the community and the society.

Discussion about the independence of youth: how does it differ between European countries? In our workshop, we explored this question through a participatory and interactive exercise.

Youth empowerment: reflection about how hard it is to activate a young person in a challenging situation.



AT THE HARD CORE OF THE CULTURE, THERE IS THE IDEA OF THE INDIVIDUAL COPING IN SOCIETY, WHICH NEEDS ACTIVE DISCUSSION AND SOLUTIONS AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL IN OUR EVERYDAY WORK.

## INNOVATIVE RESPONSES TO THOSE CHALLENGES

The participants challenged us well. Especially the discussion about the themes of housing and independence was quite deep. Questions such as “Why do you think your work is based on the Housing First model, if you don’t have an automatic path for housing?” and “Why is the independence of youth so important so early in Finland?” were very important. The outcome of the discussion about the Housing First model was that we have to continue developing our housing paths with our clients and partners. The issue of the Finnish culture and early independence is also an issue that needs to be more discussed in Finland, the culture is changing and so is the benefit system. Still, at the hard core of the culture, there is the idea of the individual coping in society, which needs active discussion and solutions at the individual level in our everyday work.

In addition, the discussion about the working methods and comparing youth work and social work – Are we doing more social than youth work? – was important for us. Often, social work is more based on the individual while youth work is done with groups and at the level of the community. Both perspectives are needed when supporting youth. In the end, it does not matter, if we are talking about social work or youth work: what matters are the results at the level of the individual and the community. We think that this reflection was useful for the participants as well, as we tried to gain a deeper understanding and awareness of the work and its meaning and function for young people, society and the youth workers themselves. Some participants said that this type of service should be established in their own country as well.

## KEY TRENDS IDENTIFIED (COMMONALITIES BETWEEN COMMENTS/PARTICIPANTS)

The culture of early independence of youth – impacts of Finnish culture and the Nordic welfare society – housing and other social benefits and strong individual culture. On the other hand, gaining independence has become more difficult because of the changes in European societies.

Housing challenges in Europe – high level of renting especially in the cities and the popularity of studio apartment housing. On the other hand, rural areas are becoming less inhibited and therefore, there aren't any services available. This discrepancy illustrates the increasing polarisation between these different areas.

Complex services and the need for individual support – enough services, but done in silos and being too general to respond to individual needs. No holistic approach: from the individual's point of view, the measures taken by the different actors can be incoherent.

## FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

This is what we got via the feedback app:

- *"Well done!"*
- *"Thanks to Timo and Miki. They made a great workshop."*
- *"Nice concept. I like the idea to have a person who helps youth to connect with all relevant systems and build a future he/she desires. Wish we had more time for discussion and sharing."*

## LINKS TO FURTHER RESOURCES OR INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR PROJECT AVAILABLE ONLINE



<https://redcross.eu/projects/youth-shelters-in-finland?fbclid=IwAR0gw6de6bOGQbmtID8HwXcAAK81VoqHGXMCRSSGdj5BajTQZfBRhhcm2Ps>

Here is the link to our presentation:

[https://prezi.com/nodbq7uxdc0d/eayw\\_slovenia/](https://prezi.com/nodbq7uxdc0d/eayw_slovenia/)



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