



In summer 2012, as part of the Poverty is Not a Crime campaign, Housing Rights Watch conducted a survey of national laws that penalise or criminalise the behaviour of people who are homeless. Legal experts prepared country reports that describe the nature of anti-social behaviour laws, as well as other regulations or ordinances that affect homeless people.

The information in these reports was gathered from as many sources as available at the time they were prepared with publically available information only; some sections are incomplete due to the inaccessibility of the required data or lack thereof.

## Finland

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### 1. Introduction

Currently homelessness is not a criminal offence in Finland. However, certain everyday activities of homeless people are prohibited, as they are considered to jeopardise public order and safety; examples include drinking in public, littering, and urinating and defecating in public. Loitering and vagrancy are not in themselves criminal offences, however police and security personnel are authorised to intervene if an activity is considered disturbing or is endangering public safety. Currently, begging is not criminalised in Finland, but the possibility of prohibiting begging has been discussed in many forums, including the Finnish parliament. The current government programme has noted that aggressive and intrusive begging is a particular problem. Camping without the permission of the land owner is allowed to some extent in Finland, however some cities only permit camping on designated camping areas.

The Constitution of Finland sets out fundamental rights and freedoms. Public authorities must guarantee the observance of fundamental rights, which include rights such as the right to equal treatment and the right to social protection. Municipalities in Finland are responsible for organising housing for those in need of support. The Finnish government has initiated strategies and action programmes to tackle homelessness. These strategies include reducing the use of conventional shelters in favour of supported, rented accommodation. In addition, there are some programmes which address the development of services for the homeless in Finland.

### 2. Criminal Offences

*The Constitution of Finland (731/1999, as amended)*<sup>1</sup>

The Finnish Constitution declares fundamental rights and freedoms for all citizens. This is based on a wide understanding of rights deserving of protection, including traditional civil and political rights, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights. According to section 22 of the Constitution, public authorities must guarantee the observance of fundamental rights and liberties, as well as human rights, through funding or legislative measures. Section 22 also creates an

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<sup>1</sup> An unofficial translation of the Constitution of Finland is available at, <http://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/1999/en19990731.pdf>, last visited July 10, 2012.

obligation for courts and administrative bodies to interpret legislation in accordance with the fundamental rights.

According to section 19, everyone has a right to social security; those who cannot obtain the means necessary to lead a life of dignity have the right to receive subsistence and care. The public authorities must ensure the provision of adequate social, health and medical services for all, and promote the health of the population, the right to housing and opportunities to arrange one's own housing.<sup>2</sup> The fundamental rights also include equality, non-discrimination and the right to earn your livelihood through the employment, occupation or commercial activity of your choice.

In addition, Finland is party to several international conventions, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the European Social Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, under which it has committed to provide and actualise certain social rights, which include preventing homelessness.

*The Criminal Code (39/1889, as amended)*<sup>3</sup>

The Criminal Code stipulates what is punishable as a criminal offence under Finnish legislation. It is the view of Finnish legal doctrine that an act should only be criminalised if to do so will serve the purpose of safeguarding some particular object of legal protection. In practice this means that criminal legislation has to have a protective purpose. There must be a substantial social need and acceptable grounds within the context of the Finnish system of constitutional rights and freedoms in order to criminalise an act. The Finnish Ministry of Justice and the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (the "MSAH") have in their dissenting opinion on the final report of the working group investigating the prohibition of begging stated that making a city more pleasant and satisfactory cannot be, in the sense of criminal justice, such an object of legal protection.<sup>4</sup>

### 3. Administrative Offences

*The Public Order Act (612/2003, as amended)*<sup>5</sup>

The Public Order Act promotes order and security in public places and prohibits activities harming order and security. Before the enactment of the Public Order Act in 2002, a wide variety of local government ordinances were observed. As of 1 October 2003, the legal position on public order is the same throughout the country. The Public Order Act applies to places designated for public use, regardless of their ownership. These include streets, roads, pavements, market squares, parks, beaches, sports fields, cemeteries, public buildings, means of public transport, government offices, office premises and restaurants.

The Act is enforced through the penalty of a fine; this cannot be converted into imprisonment. Unpaid fines, including on-the-spot fines, are collected by way of debt recovery procedures.

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<sup>2</sup> Jan-Erik Helenelund in his doctoral thesis entitled "*Rätten till boende/bostad ur ett bostadslöshetsperspektiv*" (Right to housing/abode from a homeless perspective) and published in November 2011, discussed and criticised the current housing legislation with respect to the right to housing as provided for by the Finnish Constitution; Helenelund stated that the current housing legislation does not support the realisation of the fundamental right to housing and considered there to be certain loopholes in the legislation. The dissertation is available in Swedish at, [http://www.uwasa.fi/materiaali/pdf/isbn\\_978-952-476-368-4.pdf](http://www.uwasa.fi/materiaali/pdf/isbn_978-952-476-368-4.pdf), last visited July 11, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> An unofficial translation of the Criminal Code is available at, <http://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/1889/en18890039.pdf>, last visited July 10, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> For more information on the final report of the working group, please refer to section 4.1.

<sup>5</sup> An unofficial translation of the Public Order Act is available at, <http://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2003/en20030612.pdf>, last visited July 10, 2012.

*Offences directly affecting homeless people***Begging**

Currently begging is not a criminal offence in Finland. However, the so called organised begging phenomenon has led to increased discussion as to whether begging should be criminalised. In 2010 the Finnish Ministry of the Interior set up a working group to investigate the prohibition of begging. The working group's final report suggested that after 2008 begging tended to become more aggressive. The report suggested that organised begging has become increasingly prevalent, and noted that organised begging often has links to organised crime. The working group suggested that begging, including organised begging, should be banned in public areas and that the organisation of begging should be criminalised in the Criminal Code. The Finnish Ministry of Justice and the MSAH did not agree with the working group's proposal.<sup>6</sup>

In 2010 a bill<sup>7</sup> placed before the Finnish Parliament proposed changes to the Public Order Act. It was proposed that begging that involves oral threats, grabbing, preventing a person or a vehicle from moving or aggressive or similar behaviour should be prohibited. However this government bill lapsed. Nevertheless it is worth noting that the prohibition of begging has been discussed by the Finnish Parliament. In June 2012 a bill was brought to the attention of the Parliament proposing that the Public Order Act should be amended to prohibit begging in public places with violation punishable by a fine in accordance with the Act.<sup>8</sup> The Finnish government's programme states that the problem of aggressive and intrusive begging practices will be addressed by means of developing the maintenance [of] public order and legislation.<sup>9</sup>

## Sleeping rough

## Temporary camping

In Finland temporary camping is considered to be covered under the concept of "every man's rights" (*jokamiehenoikeus*). According to "every man's rights", everyone has the right to use land without the permission of the owner so long as the use is temporary, for a short time and harmless. However, setting up a fire is not permitted without the permission of the land owner and camping is not allowed on domestic premises.

The cities of Helsinki and Vantaa do not permit unauthorised camping in areas owned by the cities, however there are designated camping areas where camping is permitted. The city of Vantaa has authorised the police to intervene in the event of unauthorised camping without the city needing to

<sup>6</sup> The final report of the working group is available in Finnish at, [http://www.intermin.fi/intermin/biblio.nsf/A76D52A8F876DE07C22577B4001BCE18/\\$file/312010.pdf](http://www.intermin.fi/intermin/biblio.nsf/A76D52A8F876DE07C22577B4001BCE18/$file/312010.pdf), last visited July 10, 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Available in Finnish at <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/esitykset/he/2010/20100330>, last visited July 10, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Available in Finnish at [http://www.eduskunta.fi/triphome/bin/thw.cgi/trip/?\\${APPL}=utpla&\\${BASE}=faktautpla&\\${THWIDS}=0.43/1341918523\\_141213&\\${TRIPPIFE}=PDF.pdf](http://www.eduskunta.fi/triphome/bin/thw.cgi/trip/?${APPL}=utpla&${BASE}=faktautpla&${THWIDS}=0.43/1341918523_141213&${TRIPPIFE}=PDF.pdf), last visited July 10, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Available in English at <http://valtioneuvosto.fi/hallitus/hallitusohjelma/pdf/en334743.pdf>, last visited July 10, 2012.

request such intervention.

### Criminal trespass

Section 11 of Chapter 28 of the Criminal Code defines criminal trespass as when a person, without authorisation, uses another's land either (i) by performing construction, excavation or similar, or (ii) by taking possession of his or her land or a building or a part thereof, unless such an act caused only minor inconvenience.

Long term use that prevents the owner from using the land (such as long term camping) can be seen as taking possession of another's land within the definition of criminal trespass. However, camping that lasts for only a few days, and does not cause any damage or disturb the peace, would not fall within this description. Criminal trespassing is a complainant offence<sup>10</sup>.

At the request of a land owner, the police can intervene by moving campers from an area. Otherwise, the police can intervene in the case of people camping only if it causes a disturbance, a health hazard or if those camping exceed their rights by setting up a fire without the permission of the land owner.

### Loitering or vagrancy

Finnish legislation does not prohibit loitering or vagrancy. However, police and security stewards can remove a person who is causing a disturbance or who has unlawfully entered an area (as described below). The police maintain public order and security primarily through advice, requests and orders which could include requesting a person who is considered to be violating public order or posing a threat to security to move along.

### *Offences indirectly affecting the homeless*

#### **Drinking alcohol in public**

##### Prohibition on the use of intoxicating substances in public

According to section 4 of the Public Order Act the use of intoxicating substances in built-up areas, at border crossing points and on public transport is prohibited. However, this prohibition does not apply to the consumption of alcoholic beverages in a park or similar public place, provided that the consumption of the alcoholic beverages and its associated behaviour do not prevent or unreasonably restrict the right of others to use the area for its proper purpose. In accordance with section 16 of the Act, violation of this prohibition will, upon sentencing, lead to a fine.

##### Apprehension of intoxicated persons

According to the Police Act (493/1995, as amended),<sup>11</sup> police officers have the right to apprehend a person to protect him or her where it is

<sup>10</sup> An offence whereby a request of prosecution is required from the complainant.

<sup>11</sup> An unofficial translation of the Police Act is available at <http://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/1995/en19950493.pdf>, last visited July 10, 2012.

considered that there is an immediate and serious danger to life, physical integrity, security or health because the individual is unable to take care of him or herself and the danger cannot be otherwise eliminated or the person otherwise looked after. This includes the apprehension of an intoxicated person. A person who is apprehended under this provision and who is under 18 years of age is to be immediately taken to his or her legal guardian or, if this is not possible, to the child welfare authority.

The Act and Decree on Treating Intoxicated Persons (461/1973, as amended)<sup>12</sup> lays down the provisions on how to treat an intoxicated person who has been apprehended in accordance with the Police Act. An intoxicated person who is not endangering the safety of others is to be taken to a state-run detoxification centre or some other facility if there is no other place that the intoxicated person could be taken to be looked after. The preference is to take the intoxicated person to his or her residence or to the residence of a family member. If the intoxicated person is violent, is known to have been violent on previous occasions or cannot for other reasons be taken to the state-run detoxification centre, he or she is to be taken into police custody. The intoxicated person is to be given immediate medical care if he or she requires it.

An intoxicated person can be apprehended and taken into police custody if this is considered necessary due to the level of his or her intoxication and for reasons of health or public order and safety. The apprehended person is to be released as soon as possible, and must be released within 12 hours. He or she is to be monitored and provided with adequate medical care. The intoxicated person has to submit to any medical procedures that are considered necessary due to the level of intoxication. Guidance and instructions should be given to the intoxicated person about the treatments for drug misuse if this is considered necessary.

As yet there are no state-run detoxification centres anywhere in Finland but there are a number of municipal detoxification centres. The shortage of these centres means that the police normally have to take people into custody and place them in a cell. Not all police departments are open around the clock, which means that intoxicated people may be transported a considerable distance.

Removing and preventing the entry of intoxicated individuals by security stewards

According to the Security Stewards Act (533/1999, as amended)<sup>13</sup>, security stewards perform the role of maintaining order and security in the area of their operation. Usually they are hired by companies or event organisers. The security stewards can prevent individuals who, on account of their intoxication, behaviour or equipment, can reasonably be suspected of endangering order from entering their area of operation. Security stewards have the right to remove any person from their area of operation if that person is in an intoxicated state and is disturbing public order or other people.

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<sup>12</sup> Available in Finnish at <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1973/19730461>, last visited July 10, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> An unofficial translation of the Security Stewards Act is available at <http://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/1999/en19990533.pdf>, last visited July 1, 2012.

## Other activities and other offences

### Prohibition from causing disturbance

According to section 3 of the Public Order Act, it is prohibited to disturb public order or endanger public security in a public place by making a noise, repeated threatening gestures, aggressive movements or verbal threats, or by embarking on other similar threatening behaviour likely to cause fear, such as shooting or throwing objects or causing some similar disturbance. Such actions are also prohibited at private locations, if their effects extend to a public place. Violation of this prohibition is punishable by a fine.

### Public urination and the offering of sexual services

According to section 7 of the Public Order Act, urinating and defecating in a public place resulting in a disturbance of public order or a public health risk is prohibited and is punishable by a fine. The same section prohibits the purchase or offering of sexual services for payment in public places, which is again punishable by a fine.

### Littering

According to the Waste Act (1072/1993, as amended),<sup>14</sup> littering is prohibited. The perpetrator is obliged to clean up the area, and failure to do so is punishable by a fine.

### Bathing

Before the Public Order Act came into force the position regarding public bathing was determined by local government regulations, which could prohibit swimming in fountains. However the Act does not contain any prohibition on bathing. Swimming in fountains is seen as unmannerly. The police can intervene in the case of behaviour which causes a disturbance.

According to section 21 of Chapter 17 of the Criminal Code a person who publicly performs an obscene act which causes offence may be sentenced for public obscenity to a fine or imprisonment for a maximum of six months. Acts which cause observers to feel annoyance or disdain can be considered acts of public obscenity. Exhibitionism may fall within this.

## Protection of public and domestic areas by the police

The police are as a rule responsible for order and safety in public places.<sup>15</sup> Private security companies and security stewards maintain security at private events and locations. According to section 14 of the Police Act, police officers may remove anyone who unlawfully intrudes upon, or fails to comply with an order to leave, private premises at the request of the occupant or their representative. Police officers

<sup>14</sup> An unofficial translation of the Waste Act available at <http://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/1993/en19931072.pdf>, last visited July 10, 2012.

<sup>15</sup> More information about the Finnish Police is available at [http://www.poliisi.fi/poliisi/home.nsf/pages/index\\_eng](http://www.poliisi.fi/poliisi/home.nsf/pages/index_eng), last visited July 10, 2012.

may remove anyone with permission to be in a place if he or she disturbs the domestic or public peace of others or causes considerable disturbance in other ways and there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the disturbance will recur. If it is likely that such a removal will not prevent the disturbance from recurring, police officers may apprehend the person causing the disturbance.

Police officers can remove a person if he or she has made threats or behaved in such a way as to give rise to the conclusion that he or she is likely to commit an offence against life, health, liberty, domestic premises or property. A person may also be removed from a place if he or she has made threats or is behaving in such a way as to lead the conclusion that he or she is likely to cause a considerable disturbance or pose an immediate danger to public order and security; in making this assessment the police may also have regard to that person's previous behaviour in similar situations. If it is apparent that a person's removal is an inadequate measure and the disturbance or danger cannot otherwise be eliminated, the person may be apprehended. The police usually initially intervene in the above mentioned situations by giving guidance, advice and warnings.

#### *Miscellaneous ordinances and decrees*

##### *Social Welfare Act (710/1982, as amended)<sup>16</sup>*

According to Sections 17, 22 and 23 of the Social Welfare Act, municipalities are responsible for organising housing services, including service housing and supported accommodation,<sup>17</sup> for people who, for special reasons, need help or support in organising housing or their living conditions. Under section 27 of the Act, municipalities can establish, acquire or otherwise reserve housing, supported accommodation units and places for institutional care as required in order to meet local needs.

##### *The Act on Accommodation and Food Service Operations (308/2006, as amended)<sup>18</sup>*

The homeless often stay in shelters or lodgings meant for temporary accommodation. The Act on Accommodation and Food Service Operations not only covers hotel accommodation and restaurants, but also temporary accommodation in dorms and homeless shelters. According to section 5 of the Act, the accommodation or food service provider has the right to select its customers and maintain order; a customer may be requested to leave the premises if he or she disturbs other customers, causes a disturbance in other ways or does not fulfil the set requirements as to customers of the accommodation in question. Principles of equality and non-discrimination must be complied with at all times. Quality requirements are assessed based on the Health Protection Act (763/1994, as amended) and the Land Use and Building Act (132/1999, as amended).

#### *Repression of offences*

##### Removal, apprehension and custody of individuals by security stewards

<sup>16</sup> An unofficial translation of the Social Welfare Act is available at, <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/1982/en19820710.pdf>, last visited July 11, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Supported housing entails more independent living arrangements, while service housing refers to separate service housing units whereby support is arranged. Service housing is usually offered to persons who need more help with everyday tasks.

<sup>18</sup> Available in Finnish at, <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/2006/20060308>, last visited July 11, 2012.

The duty of security stewards is to maintain order and security and to prevent crime and accidents at the event or site at which they have been appointed as security stewards. They maintain order and security in their area of operation primarily through advice, requests and orders. Security stewards can prevent any person who does not meet the requirements for entry imposed by the event organiser or proprietor, or can with reason be suspected of possessing objects or substances whose possession is prohibited, from entering their area of operation. Security stewards can also bar from entry anyone who can, on the basis of their earlier behaviour, reasonably be suspected of endangering order or security.

Security stewards can remove any person from their area of operation if that person is disturbing order or endangering security by behaving in a threatening manner or by being noisy or acting violently, and may similarly remove those who, despite being warned, fail to obey an essential order issued to maintain order or security. If removal from the site is evidently insufficient and the disturbance or danger cannot otherwise be eliminated, security stewards have the right to apprehend such a person, provided that apprehension is necessary in order to combat a serious danger to other people or to property. The apprehended person must be handed over to the police without delay.

#### 4. *Appeals procedure*

The Finnish legal system is based on statute but is not a codified system. An Act of Parliament is adopted when Parliament approves a government bill for the Act and the President of Finland signs the Act. The Constitution is based on a tripartite division of powers. Legislative powers are exercised by the Parliament, which also decides on state finances, governmental powers are exercised by the President of the Republic and the government, and judicial powers are exercised by independent courts of law, with the Supreme Court and the Supreme Administrative Court being the courts of last resort.

Finland does not have a separate constitutional court. The constitutionality of Acts is decided upon by the President of Finland and the Constitutional Committee of the Parliament. The Constitutional Committee monitors the constitutionality of legislation during the legislative process. The Chancellor of Justice and the courts supervise its legality. If a court believes that the application of an act would be in conflict with the Constitution, the court will give primacy to the Constitution. If a provision in a decree or other form of secondary legislation is in conflict with the Constitution or with primary legislation, the courts and other public authorities will not apply it. The Chancellor of Justice oversees the lawfulness of the official acts of the government and the President of the Republic.

Anyone is entitled to petition the Chancellor of Justice for redress if she or he believes that a basic right, liberty or human right guaranteed under the Constitution has not been observed. A petition to the European Parliament can be submitted by any citizen of the European Union where it concerns a subject which comes within the European Union's fields of activity and affects that person directly. A complaint to the European Commission can be lodged by anyone against a Member State for any measure (law, regulation or administrative action) or practice attributable to that Member State which they consider to be incompatible with a provision or a principle of EU law. Individuals, non-governmental organisations or groups of individuals also have the right to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights in respect of allegations that the state is violating their rights under the European Human Rights Convention once they have exhausted the domestic remedies available.

#### 5. **National Case Law**

There is no recent case law relating to the issue of homelessness.

According to the Act on Developing Housing Conditions (919/1985, as amended),<sup>19</sup> municipalities are to develop housing conditions and, in particular, to ensure such measures are directed towards improving the housing conditions of people living in inadequate housing conditions and the homeless. In a decision in respect of the City of Pietarsaari in 1995, the Finnish Chancellor of Justice noted that the housing conditions of the Romany population should be improved by acquiring or renting a sufficient number of apartments. The City of Pietarsaari's policy at that time did not develop the housing conditions of the Romany population and therefore did not comply with the Act.<sup>20</sup>

## 6. International Case Law

## 7. Additional Information

From 1937 to 1986 the Vagrancy Act was in force in Finland. The Act was concerned with the care and control of vagrants (who were the outcasts of Finnish society), prostitutes and beggars. In accordance with the Vagrancy Act a person could be taken under "vagrancy control". This meant that a person could be given orders concerning, *inter alia*, his or her domicile. Vagrants were registered and if such orders did not work they could be sent to working institutions for fixed periods. However, this legislation lost its purpose when social welfare started to develop in Finland, and the Vagrancy Act was annulled in 1987.

The Public Order Act came into force in 2003. Before this, the Local Government Act (365/1995, as amended) permitted local government to create regulations to improve public order and safety. These often prohibited hawking and begging. However, following the implementation of the Public Order Act, the ability of local government to create regulations on such matters was removed.

As stated above, homelessness is not a criminal offence, and there are no plans to criminalise it in Finland, however the state aims to tackle homelessness through its comprehensive social protection legislation and various development programmes.

### *Social protection*

Social protection in Finland involves all focal points in society: employment, housing, education and training and development. The Ministry of the Environment has primary responsibility for tackling homelessness and the Ministry particularly aims to improve the supply of small rented apartments, to channel investment grants for special groups into projects that alleviate homelessness, and to develop new ways to help people from groups with special needs to find accommodation. The MSAH provides support, including benefits and services, to end homelessness, sustain independent housing for people and to help them deal with housing costs. Further, there is a housing policy action programme for reducing long-term homelessness.<sup>21</sup>

The three cities in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area are cooperating to combat homelessness by improving housing services for the homeless. For this purpose a network including the Centre of

<sup>19</sup> An unofficial translation of the Act on Developing Housing Conditions is available at <http://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/1985/en19850919.pdf>, last visited July 12, 2012.

<sup>20</sup> The decision is available in Finnish at <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/viranomaiset/foka/1995/19950781?search%5Btype%5D=pika&search%5Bpika%5D=asunnot%2A>, last visited July 12, 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Further information on welfare and health promotion in Finland is available in English at <http://www.stm.fi/en/welfare>, last visited July 10, 2012.

Expertise on Social Welfare in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area (“Socca”),<sup>22</sup> the Ministry of the Environment, the MSAH, RAY, Finland’s Slot Machine Association (a charitable organisation that raises funds by running gambling slot machines throughout Finland) and other organisations and companies that provide services for the homeless has been created.<sup>23</sup>

#### *The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland*

The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (“ARA”) is a governmental agency operating under the supervision of the Ministry of the Environment which works to implement Finnish social housing policy. ARA’s main task is to finance state-subsidised rental housing production and it also makes grants for housing repairs and supervises the granting of state guarantees on loans for owner-occupied housing.<sup>24</sup>

#### Development programmes

##### The “Kaste” programme

The Finnish government adopts a new National Development Programme for Social Welfare and Health Care (the “Kaste” programme) every four years; the latest programme was adopted on 2 January, 2012. The programme is based on the Act on Planning and Government Grants for Social Welfare and Health Care (733/1992, as amended). The programme defines key social and health policy targets, priority action areas for development activities and monitoring and essential legislative projects, guidelines and recommendations, with the objective of national, regional and local actors working together to implement the reforms. The targets of the current programme include continuing an existing programme to reduce long-term homelessness.<sup>25</sup>

##### The “Nimi ovesa” programme

The “Nimi ovesa” programme is a two-year programme (2012-2014) to develop services for the homeless. It is funded by Tekes, the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation, and it aims to develop services to reduce and prevent homelessness based on the housing first principles. According to the housing first principle, housing is the starting point for a successful social rehabilitation process. The idea is that the primary need is to obtain stable housing, and that other issues that may affect the individual(s) concerned can and should be addressed once housing is obtained. Four large cities, Helsinki Diaconess Institute, the non-profit association

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<sup>22</sup> For further information on Socca is available in English at <http://www.socca.fi/>, last visited July 10, 2012.

<sup>23</sup> Further information is available in English at <http://www.ymparisto.fi/default.asp?contentid=246424&lan=fi&clan=en>, last visited July 10, 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Further information is available in English at <http://www.ara.fi/default.asp?node=679&lan=en>, last visited July 10, 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Information on the programme available in Finnish at <http://www.stm.fi/julkaisut/nayta/-/julkaisu/1578410>, and in English at <http://www.stm.fi/en/publications/publication/-/julkaisu/1582307#en>, last visited July 10, 2012.

Silta-valmennusyhdistys and Vailla vakinaista asuntoa<sup>26</sup> participate in the programme, which is coordinated by Socca.

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<sup>26</sup> *Vailla vakinaista asuntoa ry* (“No Fixed Abode”) (“Vva”) is an NGO founded by the homeless themselves in 1986. The aim of Vva is to improve the living conditions of the homeless. Further information on the organisation is available in Finnish and English at <http://www.vvary.fi/>, last visited July 10, 2012.