

Learning programme on social housing and homelessness

Programme overview

This programme is designed to help cities strengthen their work on social housing and homelessness through peer learning, practical exchange, and structured reflection. Over the year, participants will take part in online and in-person activities that will help you better understand your challenge, learn from other cities, and develop a realistic Action Plan for your own local context. The programme combines shared learning for the whole cohort with moments to work on each city's own priorities.

The overall structure of the programme is anchored around the following activities:

- A needs assessment, to better understand the cohort's knowledge gaps and training needs
- an onboarding session and a limited number of webinars, to introduce the main concepts and support progress on the Action Plan
- A policy transfer study visit, which will take place in Barcelona in June
- A challenge-based learning event (location still to be announced), towards the end of September
- And a final peer review and graduation moment, within the context of the Social Innovation Lab (towards the end of October, location to be announced).

The programme is built around one simple idea: learning should lead to action. For this reason, the Action Plan is the main learning thread running through the whole programme. Cities will not be expected to complete it all at once. Instead, they will develop it step by step across the different activities, moving from understanding their challenge, to identifying the change they want to achieve, to defining possible solutions, resources, and implementation steps. The programme uses a simple theory of change approach to support this process. In practice, this means that cities will be asked throughout the programme to reflect on four basic questions: what is the challenge, what change do we want to achieve, what needs to happen for this change to happen, and what should we do first in our local context. This approach will help cities make their Action Plans clearer, more realistic, and more useful.

Programme objectives and themes

By the end of the programme, each participating city should have:

- A clearer understanding of its main challenge in the area of social housing and/or homelessness;
- A stronger knowledge of approaches used by other cities, and of policy solutions of proven impact;
- A more concrete idea of what could work in its own context, and
- A draft Action Plan that can support local follow-up and implementation.

The programme follows a simple progression logic. First, cities build a shared understanding of the topic. Second, they learn from experts and from the experience of other cities. Third, they work on real challenges and test practical solutions. Fourth, they review and strengthen their own Action Plan before final submission.

Based on the application forms submitted by participants, the following learning themes have been identified:

- Cross-cutting themes:
 - defining the local challenge and building an Action Plan
 - using a simple theory of change to move from diagnosis to action
 - linking housing, social services and support pathways
 - data collection, needs assessment, diagnosis and monitoring
 - funding, financing and long-term sustainability
 - communication, evaluation and transferability between cities.
- Substantive policy themes:
 - prevention of homelessness and housing loss
 - housing-led approaches
 - Housing First and its possible adaptations to different groups and contexts
 - access to social and affordable housing for vulnerable groups
 - homelessness and housing exclusion affecting migrants, women, young people, and other groups with specific needs
 - emergency and temporary responses as part of a wider local system.

The programme will not try to cover every possible dimension of homelessness or housing exclusion. Instead, it will focus on a selected number of themes that are especially relevant for the participating cities, while keeping space for peer exchange and for different local realities. This also means that some examples presented during the programme should be seen as sources of inspiration, not as ready-made models to copy.

Programme structure and activities

Activity	Timeline	Description	Action Plan progress
Onboarding	Thursday, 16 April 2026	The onboarding session will then introduce the overall logic of the programme, expectations for participation, the Action Plan process, and the role of theory of change as the common thread of the learning journey. Cities will also have an opportunity to briefly introduce themselves and their local challenge, and to ask questions about the programme.	Start Sections A-B: context and baseline; focus challenge.
Webinar 1: from challenge to change	Wednesday, 13 May 2026	This first webinar will help build a shared understanding of the programme's core concepts and language. It will introduce the theory of change approach in simple terms and connect it to housing and homelessness policies. It will also include an introduction to housing-led approaches and Housing First, as an illustrative example. This session will help cities reflect on the results they want to achieve locally and on the type of change they are trying to create.	Draft Sections A-B and prepare first ideas for Section C
Webinar 2: understanding needs and gathering data	End of May – beginning of June (exact date TBD)	This webinar will focus on diagnosis. It will explore how cities can better understand the needs of people affected by homelessness and housing exclusion, how services interact, and what kinds of data can support a more integrated response. Topics will include local needs assessment, risk factors, and practical approaches to data collection and monitoring (including ETHOS' guidelines).	
Policy transfer study visit	Barcelona, June 2026	This first in-person event will focus on learning from practice and reflecting on what may be transferable to other local contexts. The visit will explore housing-led approaches in	Develop Sections C-D and start sketching Section E.

(Barcelona, June 2026)		particular for youth and women, with a particular focus on how these approaches are organised and implemented in practice. It will also include a focus on financing, including municipal instrument and external sources. Alongside the site visits and thematic inputs, the programme will include a dedicated session on policy transferability, as well as structured reflection sessions to help cities identify what is relevant for their own context and translate key insights into their Action Plan.	
Webinar 3: peer-learning	Beginning of September	After the study visit, a short webinar will help cities turn learning into local design choices. This session will focus on making the Action Plan more concrete and realistic. It will help cities review what they learned from the study visit, what seems transferable, what would need adaptation, and what is not relevant for their context. It may also introduce practical reflection on resourcing, funding opportunities, and local coordination needs.	Strengthen Sections C-D and continue Section E.
Challenge-based study visit	End of September	The second in-person event will use a challenge-based format. Instead of focusing mainly on good practices, it will centre on a real and current challenge presented by the host city. Participants will work together to understand the situation, identify barriers, discuss possible responses, and propose practical ideas. This format is intended to help cities go deeper into problem-solving and test how the theory of change approach can support more operational thinking. Specific themes will likely include communication, evaluation, and questions linked to specific vulnerable groups, but the final design will depend on the evolving needs of the cohort.	Develop Sections E-F: actions, roadmap, resources, risks and monitoring.
Webinar 4: final peer-review checkpoint	Mid-October	This webinar will take place shortly before the Social Innovation Lab and will serve as a final online peer-review moment. Cities will share the main elements of their near-final Action Plan, receive structured feedback from peers, and identify the points that still need strengthening before the final in-person review. The aim is to help participants arrive at the Social Innovation Lab with a more solid draft and a clearer sense of the questions they still want to test.	Refine Sections E-F and prepare the full draft.
Social Innovation Lab	End of October	The final milestone of the programme will take place within the Social Innovation Lab. At this stage, cities will present near-final versions of their Action Plans and receive feedback from peers and experts. The purpose is to strengthen the plans before final submission by testing their coherence, feasibility, transferability, and relevance. This final stage is also an opportunity to reflect on what cities have learned throughout the programme, what they are ready to take forward locally, and what further support may be useful after the end of Year 1.	Complete Section G and final improvements to all sections.

Kindly note that this programme is tentative and that the activities and their scope will be confirmed as it moves forward – this will give us room to adapt and update it based on the needs of participants and their evolution within the programme.

Contact persons

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