

## Women's Visual Voices Project: Helsinki Meeting (2025 August)

Launched in September 2024, the Women's Visual Voices Erasmus+ project uses participatory photography to put the voices, stories, and images of women with lived experience of homelessness in the center of improving safety in homelessness services.

A five-day meeting was held in August in Helsinki, hosted by Y-Foundation, No Fixed Abode, and Naistenkartano with representatives from project partner and local implementing organisations. The meeting was a key milestone in the project where participants have:

- Shared learnings and experiences in running photographic workshops with women experiencing homelessness and staff supporting them.
- Reviewed and reflected on the photographs taken by women experiencing homelessness, asking what these images reveal about women's safety needs.
- Explored practical changes that services can make to better support women regarding their environment, relationships, internal processes in the services and on the policy level.
- Visited a hostel offering temporary accommodation for women.

A bench beneath the maple tree. A safe place. If someone is there, others keep an eye on one another. If someone hasn't moved for a couple of hours, someone will go and check that they're still alive.



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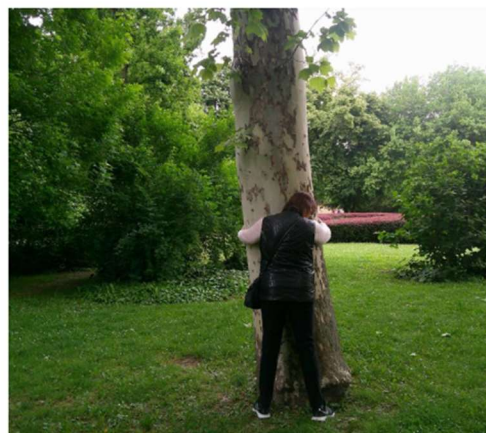


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**Betti, one of the participants, summed up her week like this:**

“Most homeless people are rootless: they have no connections, no bonds, no support. And just like a tree without roots can’t absorb water or nutrients and eventually dies, a person without relationships, help, or motivation will slowly wither inside. Sometimes all it takes is a gardener—someone who takes care of them for a while, gives water and support. That’s what I want to do. Through my therapeutic garden sessions, I can offer this to people living in our shelter. These thoughts became clearer for me during our time in Helsinki—being physically away gave me the distance to see the issues and my own vocation better.

Nature — where I feel at home. Here, I recharge. All pain fades away. It eases tension, calms me, and fills me with strength and positive energy. In my current situation, it helps me a lot.



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Visiting the women’s shelter there made me even more motivated. It was inspiring to see how even in a small-scale service, everything was spotlessly clean, and yes, the sauna was a surprise for us—but totally natural there. Residents meet weekly to discuss things, make decisions together, and receive more personalized support. At Lūsankoti I saw, in a small setting, what Finland practices on a larger scale: complete respect for human dignity.”

**Bogi, at the end of the week, shared this:**

“The topic is serious, and my visit to Finland deeply touched me. Just the calm of the landscape and the fresh air was refreshing—imagine having a sauna in the middle of the forest, it was incredible! I could slow down, focus, look inward, and reflect. During our stay we explored the issue of homeless women’s safety, and I was truly impressed by the dedication and professionalism of the Finnish experts. It was also wonderful to reconnect with colleagues from other countries, to talk and share experiences. It was clear that they don’t just work on a theoretical level, but really do everything possible in practice to help those in need. This experience enriched me not only professionally but also personally. It gave me hope that solutions exist, and that we can do a lot to improve the safety of homeless women.”

A Valentine’s Day decoration hung up and left behind.

When I see a woman who has lost everything, I can only imagine how many cracks she has inside. Recovering from them may simply require a lot.



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