

Lisboa, 9-10 December 2013

Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

# HOUSING FIRST

*Ending Homelessness*

## Housing First Europe – Evaluation Results

Dr. Volker Busch-Geertsema

Organized by

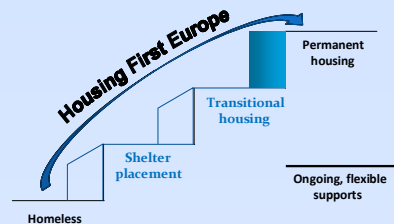


# Housing First Europe

## Evaluation Results

Housing First International Conference  
Lisbon, 9-10 December 2013

Dr. Volker Busch-Geertsema  
GISS – Association for Innovative Social Research and Social Planning, Bremen, Germany  
Coordinator of Housing First Europe



Supported by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Security – PROGRESS (2007-2013)





## The Framework of Housing First Europe

- ➡ Social experimentation project funded by European Commission
  - ➡ Evaluation of five test sites and mutual learning with five peer sites implementing (elements of) the approach
  - ➡ 5 test sites (Amsterdam, Budapest, Copenhagen, Glasgow and Lisbon)
  - ➡ 5 peer sites (Dublin, Ghent, Gothenburg, Helsinki, Vienna)
  - ➡ High profile steering group (including Sam Tsemberis from Pathways to Housing, Prof. Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Prof. Judith Wolf....)
  - ➡ Project period: August 2011 to July 2013
  - ➡ Main contractor: Danish National Board of Social Services
  - ➡ Coordinator: Volker Busch-Geertsema, GISS, Bremen, Germany



## The Framework of Housing First Europe

- ➡ European evaluation based on local evaluations of
  - ➡ Dorieke Wewerinke, Sara al Shamma, and Judith Wolf (Amsterdam)
  - ➡ Boróka Fehér and Anna Balogi (Budapest)
  - ➡ Lars Benjaminsen (Copenhagen)
  - ➡ Sarah Johnsen with Suzanne Fitzpatrick (Glasgow)
  - ➡ José Ornelas (Lisbon)
- ➡ All evaluations (local as well as European) available on [www.housingfirsteurope.eu](http://www.housingfirsteurope.eu)

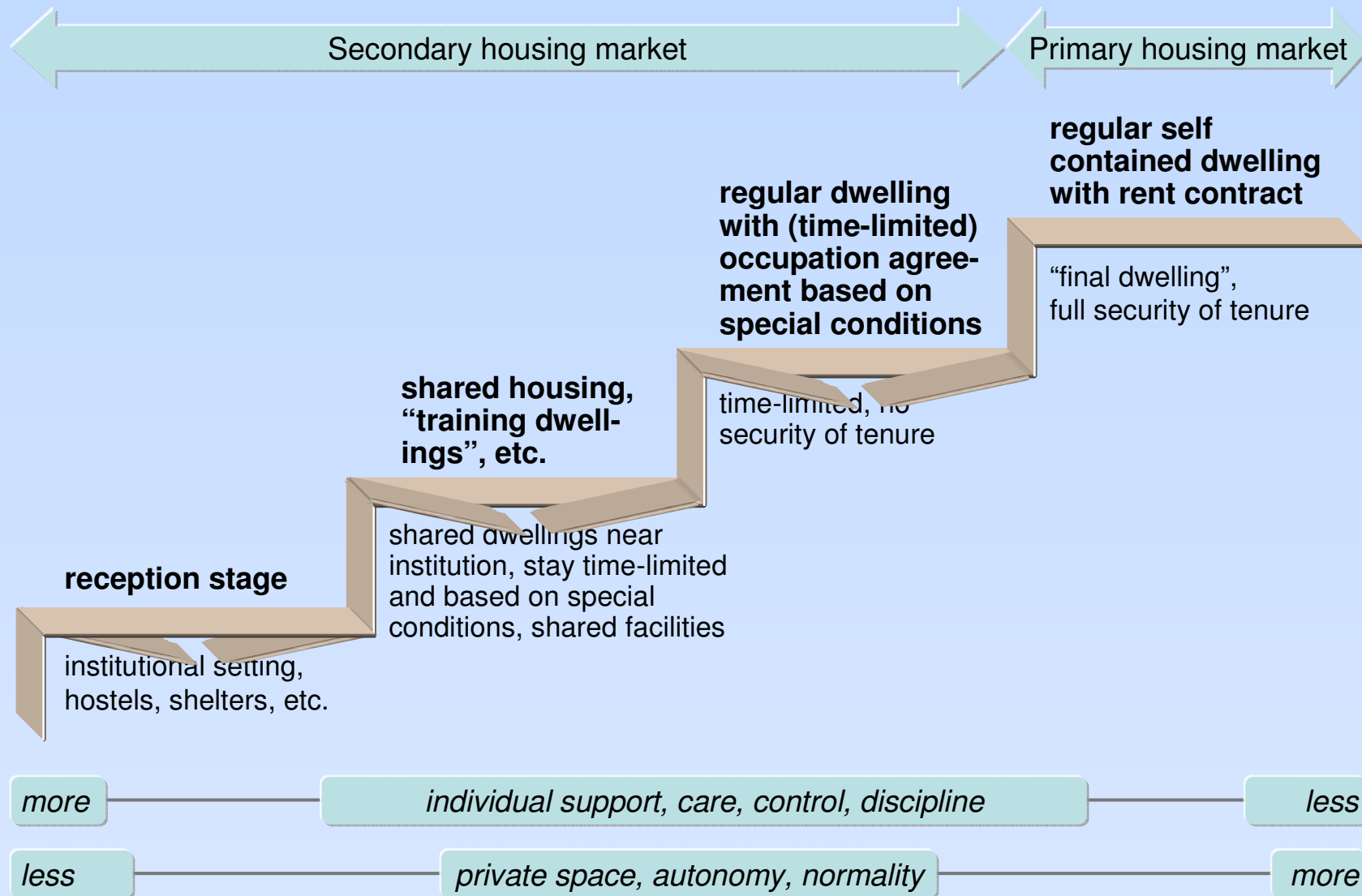


## What is Housing First in the European context?

- Housing First provides homeless people with immediate access to ordinary scattered housing and on-going support
- Housing First approach fits long-term trends in social services
  - ▶ De-institutionalisation and decentralisation of service provision
  - ▶ Normalisation of living conditions (including housing conditions)
  - ▶ Individualisation of support
  - ▶ From place-centred support (supported housing) to person-centred support (support in housing)
- Alternative to staircase systems and approaches requiring “treatment first” and making people “housing ready” before they can move to ordinary, permanent housing



# Staircase of Transition



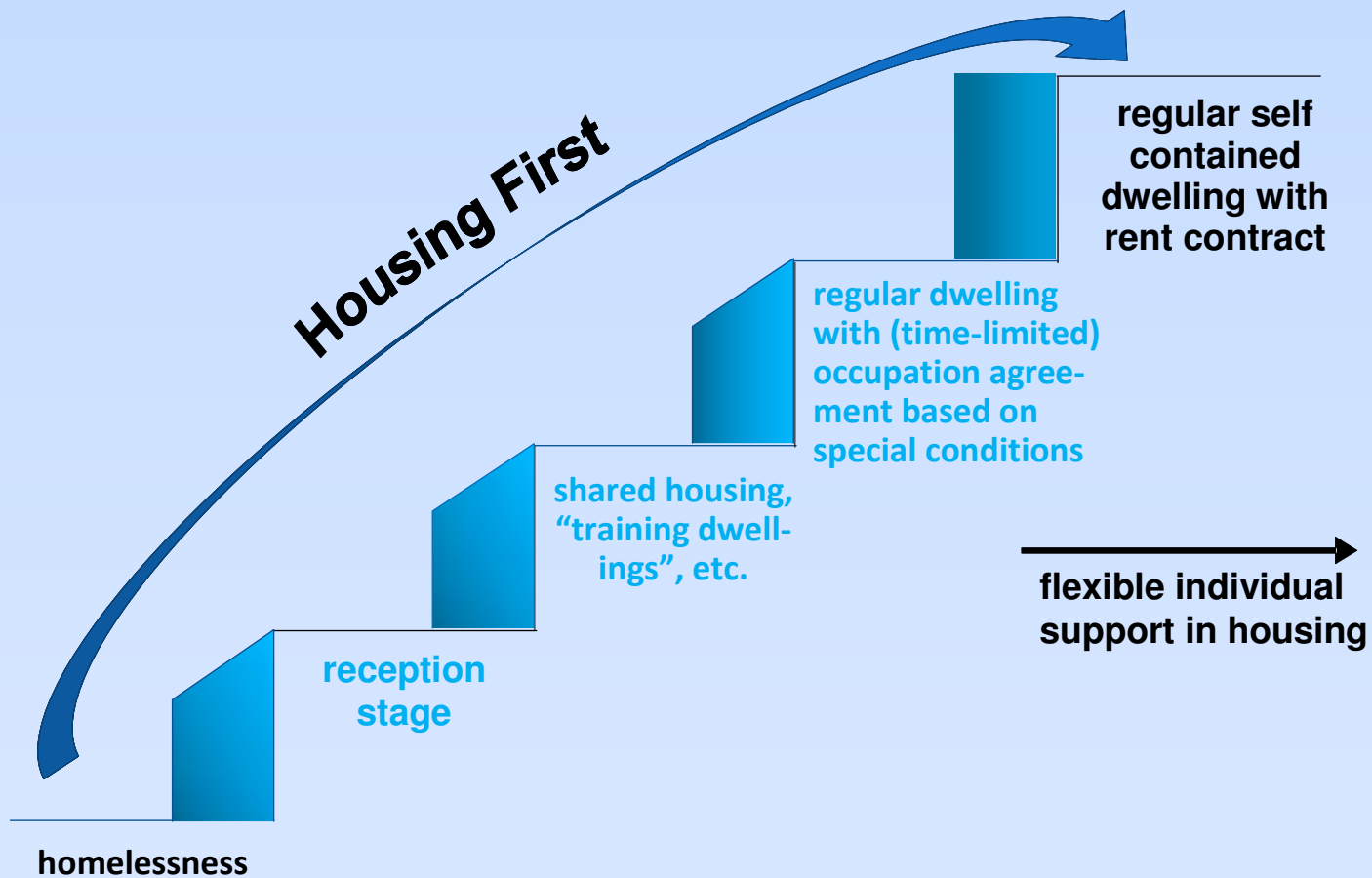


## Critique of Staircase Systems in Europe

- ➡ Stress and dislocation because of need to move between different "stages"
- ➡ Little privacy and autonomy at lower stages, lack of service user choice and freedom – revolving doors, « frequent flyers »
- ➡ Standardised support in different stages
- ➡ Skills learned in structured congregate settings often not transferable to independent living situation
- ➡ Final move to independent housing may take years and too many clients get "lost"
- ➡ Homelessness may increase rather than decrease with such systems (extending lower stages, bottleneck at upper end)



# Housing First







## **Housing First: Learning by doing**

- ➡ **Swimming can better be learned in the water than anywhere else**
- ➡ **Maintaining a tenancy can best be learned while having one**
- ➡ **Challenges:**
  - ▶ Regular payment of rent and utilities, managing scarce financial resources, regulating debts,
  - ▶ getting along with neighbours,
  - ▶ keeping a household, cleaning, cooking, shopping,
  - ▶ coping with loneliness, having visitors and controlling the door,
  - ▶ setting and following individual goals,
  - ▶ finding something meaningful to do.....



## **Eight principles of Pathways to Housing (PtH)**

1. Housing as a basic human right:  
(Almost) Immediate provision of self-contained housing without condition to be “housing ready”
2. Respect, warmth and compassion for all clients
3. A commitment to working with clients for as long as they need
4. Scattered-site housing; independent apartments
5. Separation of housing and services
6. Consumer choice and self-determination
7. A recovery orientation
8. Harm reduction



## What is NOT Housing First

- ➡ Approaches requiring preparation, therapy, abstinence
- ➡ Projects requiring to complete previous steps in a programme to make them “housing ready” outside the housing market
- ➡ Programmes which offer transitional housing, temporary accommodation and other types of housing where the stay is time-limited and dependent on the duration of support
- ➡ Shared housing (if not the expressed will of service users)
- ➡ Projects which evict tenants because of reasons over and above those which are standard in rental contracts



## HFE test sites

- ➡ Five different test sites in five different welfare regimes
- ➡ Followed PtH in many respects but none of them exact replica
- ➡ No fidelity test, but main principles of PtH broadly covered by 4 of 5 HFE Test Sites; all served homeless people with complex and severe support needs
- ➡ Weekly visits condition (in Lisbon six visits per month)
- ➡ Client-centred approach, individual support plans
- ➡ Relatively high staff-client ratios: 1:3-5 to 1:11
- ➡ 24/7 availability of staff (mobile phone for emergencies)
- ➡ Budapest special case



## HFE test sites – Deviations from “pioneer model” (PtH)

- Deviations (confirming need for “programme drift”)
  - ▶ Target group only in one project restricted to people with diagnosed mental illness; one project targeted exclusively people with active addiction
  - ▶ ACT only used in one project, close cooperation with specialist services (addiction, mental health) in 3 of 4 others
  - ▶ Mix of congregate housing and scattered housing in Copenhagen (with opportunity to compare), all others used scattered-site housing
  - ▶ Use of social housing (in 3 projects), using allocation rights with priority for homeless people in social housing (esp. in DK and UK)
  - ▶ Direct contracts with landlords (in 3 projects, with pros and cons)
  - ▶ No use of peer-experts in 2 projects



## HFE test sites – The special case of Budapest

- ➡ Budapest included in HFE because one of very few programmes in CEE-countries integrating rough sleepers directly into mainstream housing with support, sharing some principles of Housing First approach
- ➡ But some important elements missing
  - ▶ Support time-limited to one year, of low intensity (1:24) and provided by outreach workers in addition to full-time jobs
  - ▶ Financial support with housing costs too little and time limited as well
  - ▶ Long-term housing retention no explicit target (main aim to clear forest area of homeless people)
- ➡ Good example on challenges for HF in weak welfare state



## Methodology of HFE

- Based on local evaluations of test sites and the systematic collation of results on a number of guiding key questions
  - Numbers and profile of service users
  - Support needs (and changes over time)
  - Support provided/received
  - User satisfaction
  - Housing stability / housing retention rate
  - Changes of quality of life/recovery
  - Community integration/conflicts
  - Costs and financial effects
  - Specific positive effects, challenges and lessons learned
- Local evaluations had different focus, different starting points and time-frames and followed different evaluation concepts



## Client profile and support needs

- ➡ Lisbon project probably highest share of clients with psychiatric diagnosis, but lowest proportion of people with addiction to drugs and alcohol (29.7%)
- ➡ High proportion of substance abuse in other projects, highest in Glasgow (where it was eligibility criterion)
- ➡ Single long-term homeless men, aged 36-45 and older, predominate
- ➡ Most nationals, significant proportion of ethnic minorities in Amsterdam, Copenhagen and Budapest
- ➡ Support needs: housing, finances, mental and physical health, worklessness and social isolation



## Housing retention rates in Housing First Europe test sites

	Amsterdam	Copenhagen	Glasgow	Lisbon	Budapest
Total number of service users housed	165	80	16	74	90
Unclear cases (death, left to more institutional accommodation, left with no information if housed or not etc.)	23	16	2	6	na
Basis for calculation of housing retention	142	64	14	68	na
Positive outcome (still housed)	138 (97.2%)	60 (93.8%)	13 (92.9%)	54 (79.4%)	29 (< 50%)
→ Still housed with support from HF programme	122 (85.9%)	57 (89.1%)	13 (92.9%)	45 (66.2%)	0
→ Housed without support from HF programme	16 (11.3%)	3 (4.7%)	0	9 (13.8%)	29 (< 50%)
Negative outcome (lost housing by imprisonment, eviction, "voluntary" leave into homelessness etc.)	4 (2.8%)	4 (6.3%)	1 (7.1%)	14 (20.6%)	na

Source: Local final reports, own calculations



## High housing retention rates; some caution needed

- ➡ Positive results for 4 of 5 HFE test sites, despite differences regarding target group and organisation of housing and support
- ➡ Some caution needed:
  - ▶ Copenhagen and Glasgow still at a relatively early stage (but robust results for users who were housed at least one year ago)
  - ▶ Data not as robust as in some US studies, no control groups
- ➡ Nevertheless results confirm a number of studies in the US and elsewhere that homeless people even with the most complex support needs can be housed in independent, scattered housing
- ➡ Adds to evidence of positive housing retention rates of HF approach for people with severe addiction



## Scattered-site housing preferable option for most

- ➡ Experience with congregate and scattered-site housing in same programme in Copenhagen
  - ▶ Strong indications that gathering many people with complex problems in the same buildings may create problematic environments, conflicts and unintended negative consequences
  - ▶ Clear preference of bulk of homeless people for scattered housing
- ➡ Results suggest that congregate housing should be reserved for those few persons who do either display a strong wish to live in such an environment or have not succeeded to live in scattered housing with intensive Housing First support



## **Mixed but overall positive results on changing quality of life and community integration**

- ➡ Progress for a majority in terms of substance abuse and mental health (but not for all and not in all projects)
  - ▶ “ontological security”: housing increases personal safety and reduces stress; basis for constancy, daily routine, privacy and identity construction; stable platform for more normalized life
- ➡ Less positive results for overcoming worklessness, financial problems and loneliness
- ➡ Where community integration was measured results were mixed too. While some of the project participants were engaging in activities in their community, others “kept their privacy” and were less active.



## Neighbourhood conflicts

- ➡ Neighbourhood conflicts played minor role in Copenhagen, Glasgow and Lisbon, where constructive solutions could be found in most of the rare cases that occurred.
- ➡ In Amsterdam, nuisance complaints against a third of all service users over a period of five years. Two-fifths of these complaints could be resolved in a relatively short period of time, with the tenants remaining in their homes, some participants got a second chance in another flat and only three persons were evicted during that period because of nuisance.
- ➡ In all cities where this was analysed housing providers gave very positive feedback on the way neighbourhood conflicts were handled by service providers.



## Challenges and lessons learned (1)

- ➡ Important challenge for most: Securing quick access to housing (and long waiting times in case of scattered social housing). Local shortage of affordable housing remains structural problem.
- ➡ Fixed address may lead to prison charges for offences committed earlier or creditors claiming back old debts.
- ➡ It may also be difficult for some of the re-housed persons to overcome loneliness and social isolation and some may experience a “dip in mood”, especially if they live alone and have cut ties with former peer networks dominated by problematic substance use. If they don't cut such ties they often find that “managing the door” might be a particular challenge.



## Challenges and lessons learned (2)

- ➡ Housing First approach involves change in balance of power between service providers and service users, as compared with more institutional provision. To prevent disengagement of programme participants once they have been allocated permanent housing, support staff need to make support offers which are oriented towards the individual goals of programme participants and to meet their needs and preferences.
- ➡ Problems in securing continued funding particular challenge for the sustainability of the project in Lisbon.
- ➡ In Budapest, time-limited and too little funding and a particularly weak provision of general welfare support for housing costs and the costs of living inhibited more sustainable results.



## Challenges and lessons learned (3)

- ➡ Scaling-up still slow process:
  - ➡ Few countries with national plans (Denmark, Finland, national pilots in France and Belgium), some cities (partly Vienna)
  - ➡ Against interests of some service providers
  - ➡ Lack of political will
  - ➡ Deserving/undeserving debate where housing shortage is a problem for broader strata of population
  - ➡ Paradigm change needed
  - ➡ Promotion of approach important
  - ➡ More research needed, but all points to better cost efficiency (not necessarily to huge savings)





## Some new developments after HFE has ended

### ➡ Further evidence available:

- ➡ Canada
- ➡ Camden project in London
- ➡ Intermediate report on further projects in London

### ➡ New projects started:

- ➡ Belgium (see <http://www.housingfirstbelgium.be/>)
  - ➡ Norway (part of new national strategy)
  - ➡ New dynamics in Dublin
- ➡ European Research Conference. “Housing First. What’s Second”



## Recommendations

- ➡ Housing First approach is to be recommended as a highly successful way of ending homelessness for homeless people with severe support needs
- ➡ Results of HFE demonstrate once again that even homeless people with severe addiction problems are capable of living in ordinary housing if adequate support is provided
- ➡ Eight principles of Pathways to Housing appear to be a useful device for developing Housing First projects
- ➡ Ordinary scattered housing and independent apartments should be the rule; congregate housing should be reserved for the minority who wish to live there or couldn't manage in scattered housing with support



# Recommendations

## ➡ Conditions for success

- ▶ Quick access to housing must be procured
  - ◆ Social housing can be resource where allocation can be influenced and access barriers can be removed
  - ◆ Otherwise private rental market or even owner-occupied sector
  - ◆ Social rental agencies and Y-foundation examples, how access to housing for homeless people can be improved
- ▶ Housing costs (and costs of living for those who cannot earn it by work) must be covered long-term (see Budapest example)
- ▶ Multidimensional support of high intensity must be available for people with complex needs as long as it is needed
  - ◆ Either integrated in one team (ACT) or by close cooperation with specialised services



## Recommendations

- ➡ Housing First programmes should carefully consider how to deal with nuisance and neighbourhood conflicts and should make clear agreements about that with tenants and landlords. Results show that successful management of such problems (if they occur at all) is possible in most cases under these conditions.
- ➡ Support staff have to meet particular requirements:
  - ▶ Need to show respect, warmth and compassion for all clients and put service user preferences and choices at the core of their support work
  - ▶ Have to be able to build up trusting relationship
  - ▶ Support offers have to be attractive and meet the individual needs of their clients, always based on the firm confidence that recovery is possible.



## Recommendations

- ➡ Expectations of policy makers and service providers need to remain realistic. Ending homelessness provides a platform for further steps towards social inclusion, but is not a guarantee for it and for the most marginalised individuals relative integration might often be a more realistic goal.
- ➡ Nevertheless, for support workers the aim should always be to support clients in achieving the highest level of integration that is possible in their specific situation.
- ➡ Further attempts to successfully overcome stigmatisation, social isolation, poverty and unemployment are needed, not only on the level of individual projects, but also on a structural level.



## Recommendations

- ➡ The same applies to structural exclusion of vulnerable people from housing markets. (*“Housing First is nice, but where is the housing?”*). The debate on Housing First should be used to (re-)place access to housing at the centre of the debate about homelessness while emphasising that housing alone is not enough for those with complex needs.
- ➡ Promotion of the Housing First approach as an effective method to tackle homelessness is recommended at all levels, local, regional and national as well as at the European level. Mutual learning and transnational exchange should be continued on Housing First.



## Recommendations

- Housing First approach perfect example for social investment. It should be further developed as a key element of integrated strategies to tackle homelessness at all levels.
- EU's structural funds should be used to support development and scaling-up of Housing First to promote social inclusion and combat poverty, support the transition from institutional to community-based care and as a form of social innovation.
  - ▶ The European Social Fund can be used to support services to promote the inclusion and empowerment of homeless people
  - ▶ The European Regional Development fund can support infrastructure/housing.
  - ▶ A multi-fund approach is particularly relevant for Housing First implementation.



## Recommendations

- ➡ The EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) should be used to further develop the Housing First approach in EU contexts.
- ➡ EU Commission should support a network of European experts on the Housing First approach which could give useful advice for the development of local projects and continue the process of mutual learning





## Recommendations

- Focus of HFE was on relatively small local projects for people with complex support needs. Debate remains whether Housing First approach should be reserved exclusively for this relatively small subgroup of homeless people.
  - ▶ Would be useful to test and evaluate the effectiveness of services following the same principles for people with less severe needs and for strategies implementing the Housing First philosophy in broader “housing led” strategies
  - ▶ In such a context innovative methods of needs assessment and of methods of financing flexible support are needed



## Recommendations

- ➡ Further research is needed in the following areas:
  - ▶ Cost effectiveness of the Housing First approach (taking into account previous service use and duration of support provided);
  - ▶ Gender and age specific requirements and effects of the approach for example for young homeless people under 25 should be analysed in detail;
  - ▶ More in-depth and comparative evaluation of the use of evidence based methods of social support, such as Assertive Community Treatment, Intensive Case Management and Critical Time Interventions and their applicability for different groups of homeless people and in the field of homelessness prevention
- ➡ Relevant authorities to move this research agenda forward.
  - ▶ Horizon 2020 programme could be a useful framework



**Thank you for your attention!**  
**Further info under [www.housingfirsteurope.eu](http://www.housingfirsteurope.eu)**

- ✿ Questions?
- ✿ Comments?
- ✿ Criticism?
- ✿ Suggestions?





# Contact

Dr. Volker Busch-Geertsema

Gesellschaft für innovative Sozialforschung und  
Sozialplanung e.V. (GISS, Association for  
Innovative Social Research and Social Planning)

Kohlhökerstraße 22

28203 Bremen, Germany

Fon: +49-421 – 33 47 08-2

Fax: +49-421 – 339 88 35

Mail: [vbg@giss-ev.de](mailto:vbg@giss-ev.de)

Internet: [www.giss-ev.de](http://www.giss-ev.de)