

Supporting the “Elsa Peretti Embrace” project for the empowerment and housing of young homeless women and non-binary individuals in Barcelona

Grantee: Sant Joan de Déu Serveis Socials Barcelona

Location: Spain, Europe

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Delegació a Catalunya, Human Welfare & Rights

Website: sjdserveissocials-bcn.org

Sant Joan de Déu Serveis Socials Barcelona is a Catalan non-profit organization with over 40 years of experience providing shelter and inclusive support to individuals at risk of or experiencing poverty and social exclusion. Guided by the mission of the Order of Saint John of God and its core values, the organization offers a range of services including housing programs, mental health care, and employment assistance aimed at improving the quality of life for people in vulnerable situations. **The Nando and Elsa Peretti Foundation Delegació a Catalunya** (NaEPF) has partnered with Sant Joan de Déu Serveis Socials Barcelona to advance physical and mental well-being through dignity and social inclusion across Catalonia. This partnership is reflected in the “Elsa Peretti Embrace” project, designed to support young homeless women and non-binary individuals within the Malla Program, a Sant Joan de Déu initiative launched in 2020. The project provides comprehensive, professional care, empowering participants to recover and reclaim their rights with dignity.

The 2023 Annual Report on Homelessness in Barcelona revealed a troubling rise in long-term homelessness, with the average time spent living on the streets increasing to four years and five months. The number of people experiencing street homelessness reached a record high of 1,384 individuals in 2023. Nearly 47% of those affected

have been without housing for more than two years, with men and migrants representing the majority. Notably, the report highlights a one percentage point increase in both trans and cisgender women experiencing homelessness.

In response, the NaEPF emphasizes the urgent need to strengthen support systems and invest in long-term solutions—particularly by expanding access to stable housing and essential social services. This commitment is reflected in the creation of the “Elsa Peretti Embrace” project, which promotes new opportunities for young homeless women and non-binary individuals enrolled in the Malla Program, specifically those living in the program’s housing facilities. These homes support 5 to 10 individuals at a time young women aged 18 to 29 or non-binary people of legal age most of whom have experienced gender-based violence. The project offers them a safe, dignified space to heal, rebuild, and access the rights and opportunities they deserve.

The main objectives of the project are:

1. Ensure access to and stability in decent housing for young women facing severe social exclusion, through comprehensive, community-based support tailored to each individual’s needs. The approach recognizes and addresses the intersecting factors that intensify their vulnerability.

2. Promote socio-economic autonomy by providing resources that enable participants to independently meet their basic needs, ensuring dignity and long-term stability.
3. Prevent recurrent homelessness by offering timely support and crisis intervention resources, helping participants navigate difficult periods without losing housing security.
4. Foster personal empowerment and well-being through a combination of individualized social support and group-based activities. This includes psychological assistance, self-care education and initiatives to strengthen self-esteem.
5. Enhance community integration by raising awareness of local resources, encouraging participants to build and sustain supportive relational and social networks.
6. Support educational and employment pathways by strengthening participants' access to training, job opportunities, and income-generating alternatives, ensuring they can maintain stable housing and meet their basic needs independently.

The project is designed to foster the empowerment of young women by encouraging active participation in the program, within the community, and in their personal development. This participatory approach is key to strengthening self-esteem and autonomy. Social support is provided by a dedicated educational team composed of a social worker and/or educator, and a social integrator, under the guidance of the Malla Program's management team. The social worker is responsible for designing, implementing, and evaluating individualized support plans for each participant. The social integrator focuses on enhancing participants' day-to-day autonomy within the home, offering personalized assistance with tasks or processes that may be challenging, particularly those impacted by the digital divide. In addition, the support team develops and facilitates activities that promote community engagement, active participation, and shared living skills within the housing environment.

The project ultimately aims to ensure access to safe and stable housing for five young women or non-binary individuals who have previously completed a phase of the Malla Program but continue to require specialized support. The goal is to provide a normalizing and empowering living environment, such as shared housing, that enhances their residential and overall well-being.