

House of Hope - Estonia

Introduction

House of Hope is a faith-based residential facility located in Kopli, a district of Tallinn, and is managed by the NGO The Salvation Army, an international Christian organization that provides a wide range of social services across Estonia. In addition to addiction recovery programs, The Salvation Army in Estonia operates homeless shelters, rehabilitation and resocialization services, soup kitchens, family and children's support programs, and outreach initiatives for socially marginalized populations.

Founded in 2010 by Salvation Army workers, House of Hope initially functioned as a renovated soup kitchen before developing into a secure residential program. Today, it offers an alternative to incarceration or a transitional environment for men experiencing addiction, homelessness, and social exclusion. The facility aims to provide men with the opportunity to enter a structured, abstinence-based program, often as a substitute for a traditional prison sentence. While many residents are referred through partnerships with the court system, others arrive directly from the streets or through social services, reflecting the broader mission of The Salvation Army to support reintegration and personal transformation.

Scale

House of Hope has a maximum capacity of 21 residents, with an average occupancy of around 15. Residents are not separated into groups but live together in shared accommodations.

RESCALED-principles in practice:

- Small-scale
- Differentiation
- Community-integration

Differentiation

Target group:

The facility serves adult men who are dealing with addiction to alcohol or drugs, facing incarceration, or are homeless. Entry into the program is conditional on the individual's willingness to abstain from drugs, alcohol, smoking, and to commit to completing the full program. Candidates must also agree to abide by internal rules. Individuals who have long-term patterns of aggression, are in need of more specialized psychiatric care, or those unwilling to cease methadone treatment, are not admitted.

Individuals apply by calling the program directly, with arrangements made immediately when possible. For those serving their sentence in the facility, House of Hope staff accompany them to and from their court and provide confirmation letters. They also help facilitate the travel and transition from previous incarceration facilities. Residents typically remain at the facility for 9 months to 2 years, but there is no maximum limit.

Forms of security:

The facility combines relational, static, and procedural security. Three staff members (two security guards and a designated caretaker) and three former program participants live onsite and are present 24/7. In terms of static security, surveillance cameras cover the premises, and the building is fenced and locked. Residents wear a uniform, do not have personal keys to rooms or facility entrances, and phones and computers are shared and used under supervision. Drug testing, room searches, and lock protocols are applied based on circumstance, for example if someone is serving a portion of their sentence in the facility.

Procedurally, residents may not leave the premises without permission and are not allowed to have personal communication devices. Unrestricted movement within the facility is allowed during the day; however, residents must remain in their rooms at night.

Relational security is a central pillar at House of Hope. All staff members are graduates of the program themselves and use their lived experience to encourage mutual trust and emotional safety. Residents often describe feeling supported and cared for by staff and long-term residents who often act as mentors.

Activities:

House of Hope follows a highly structured and disciplined daily program that is mandatory for all residents. This approach is designed to offer stability, promote healthy habits, and reduce the anxiety or disruptive behavior that may emerge in unstructured environments. Participation in the facility's Christian 12-step program is compulsory and central to the overall philosophy. A strong emphasis is placed on giving back, with the soup kitchen and charity work offering residents the chance to contribute to the surrounding community as a part of their routine.

From Monday to Friday, the day begins at 7:00 a.m., followed by a group prayer session and breakfast. Mornings continue with Bible readings and lessons focused on personal growth and rehabilitation, before transitioning into mandatory volunteering with the soup kitchen that extend through most of the day.

Saturdays include sessions with a psychologist, individual reflection time, and (based on behavior) permission to leave the facility for a few hours. On Sundays, residents attend church services and participate in communal leisure activities, including football and use of the facility's sauna. In warmer months, residents may join seasonal barbecues at a holiday home in Loksa, together with alumni and supporters of the program.

While residents are not responsible for cooking (meals are prepared by an external company), they are required to maintain cleanliness and participate in household chores. These activities are framed as part of the broader goal of restoring work ethic and teaching basic life skills such as cleaning and conflict resolution. Personal time is limited to evenings, and autonomy is intentionally low. Residents may watch pre-approved films or broadcasts (excluding news), read books, and engage in local educational or charitable activities.

External calls and visits with family and friends are allowed, but only at scheduled times and under staff approval. Residents may receive visitors after three months in the program on Saturdays, and weekend leave is granted according to behavior.

Community-integration

Location and architecture:

The facility is located within a densely populated district of Tallinn, a municipality heavily impacted by poverty. The choice of location was intentional: the building is at the center of a community where the need for support and rehabilitation services is particularly acute. The surrounding neighborhood is made up of apartment blocks and busy roads, with local shops and public transport nearby. While the area is known for its challenges, there has been no resistance from local residents regarding the presence of the facility. However, one of the greatest ongoing difficulties is helping residents avoid falling back into harmful patterns associated with their old environments.

The facility is composed of several interconnected buildings. The main house is well-kept and intentionally designed to feel warm and homely. The living areas and administrative spaces are furnished with cozy furniture, soft lighting, and decorative touches such as motivational posters and framed pictures. There is a lot of natural light and the living spaces are customizable. Residents share bedrooms, bathrooms, a kitchen, a living room, and common areas for leisure and group programming. The layout encourages interaction and shared responsibility while maintaining comfort and privacy where possible.

The yard surrounding the facility is equipped with additional functional spaces, including storage sheds, a trailer outfitted as a basic gym with exercise equipment, and areas for sports. Nearby, the Salvation Army also operates a church and charity shop located at the Baltic railway station, facilitating the organization's broader presence in the area and its mission of community service.

Interaction with the community:

While the facility operates as a closed program with limited access to the public (except for a brief daily window when the soup kitchen is open) it still maintains meaningful connections with the local community through volunteer service and long-standing partnerships. Residents are actively involved in the facility's daily soup kitchen operations, providing food, materials, and care to people experiencing homelessness. The facility also maintains partnerships with a variety of external organizations, including the national food supply bank, primary care providers, the Open Hope Foundation (an umbrella network for Christian rehabilitation centers), local prisons, and other rehabilitation centers.

House of Hope

Founded: 2010

Capacity: 21

Autonomy level: Restricted level of autonomy

Nearest city: Tallinn (Estonia)

Nature of interaction:

Visited by NGO Village of Hope (February 2025)

Publicity/ read more

- About House of Hope:

The Salvation Army Estonia. (n.d.). *Lootusemaja*. Retrieved December 24, 2025, from <https://www.paastearmee.ee/asukohad/lootusemaja>