



Y-FOUNDATION

**Ending Homelessness in
Finland
with Housing First**

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Warsaw

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Y-Foundation:

A non-profit social housing provider

- Founded in **1985** by:
 - The 5 largest cities in Finland, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, the Finnish Red Cross, the Finnish Association for Mental Health, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, the Confederation of Finnish Construction Industries RT, The Finnish Construction Trade Union
- Buys and constructs **affordable rental housing**
- **150+** employees
- Nationwide work is enabled by **a wide network of partners**: local authorities and housing companies, NGOs, social work of church
- **10 581** affordable social housing flats, **5436** scattered housing flats for homeless people and **1293 apartments** in supported housing units for special groups

Homelessness in Finland

- In recent years Finland has been **the only EU country** where homelessness has decreased*
- Situation in 2018: **5.482**, **4.882** single homeless persons, **600** in families
 - **Wide definition of homelessness:**
70–75 % living temporarily with friends and relatives, low amount of rough sleeping (283)
 - From 2008 to 2018: long-term homelessness has decreased **21%**, 2018: 1.162

* FEANTSA



What we wanted to do and achieve

- To halve long-term homelessness by 2011 and end it by 2015
- Conversion of all shelters and dormitory-type hostels into supported housing units
- Reinforcing Housing First approach as a mainstream organizing principle for housing and support services for homeless people

Quantitative targets*:

- 2.500 new apartments, supported housing units or care places in 10 (2008–2011) / 11 (2012–2015) major cities

*Targets of the National PAAVO Programme 2008–2015

What have we done


- **Housing:**
 - Over 3.500 new apartments built / purchased for homeless people
- **Services:**
 - 300 new professional support workers in housing social work
 - Housing advice services have been upscaled nationwide
- Housing First principle (as we understand it) has been established
- Shelters/hostels have been replaced by supported housing units

Housing options for Homeless persons in Helsinki

Year	Supported housing	Independent rental apartments	Hostels and shelters	Social housing apartments
1985	127	65	2.121	35.404
2008	552	2.033	558	68.881
2016	1.309	2.433	52	67.764

Housing First in Finland

- Housing as a **basic human and social right**
- Housing in normal surroundings/**permanent homes**
- Own **independent** rental apartment either in scattered housing or in a supported housing unit
- Own **rental contract** (normally for unlimited time)
- Adequate **support** if needed and wanted
- Autonomy/ **unconditionality**
- Normality

A photograph of a light-colored wooden door. On the left side, there is a silver-colored door handle with a black grip. Below the handle is a silver-colored kick plate with a black horizontal bar. To the right of the handle is a small silver-colored lock with a black keyhole. The text "You can't have Housing First without having housing first." is overlaid on the door.

You can't have Housing First
without having housing
first.

Shelter renovation: Why we wanted to get rid of shelters and hostels – and what made it possible?

- Living in a hostel or shelter is always a temporary solution
- A person living in a hostel is still homeless
- No privacy and very limited professional help in your problems
- Hostels sustain a culture of irresponsibility, a “prison-like” subculture
- Renovation of hostels has increased public safety
- **Carrot:** State grants for renovation 50%
- **Stick:** Obligation to work according to Housing First principles in the future
- Systematic training for personnel (also new personnel hired)

Väinölä (SLEY)



Väinölä

- Supported housing
- **33** apartments (35 tenants)
- Opened 2014
- Built by Y-Foundation
- Leased to City of Espoo
- Support provided by Salvation Army (11 co-workers)



Väinölä



Alppikatu 25

- Opened in 1936:
 - As a shelter with 250 bed places
- Since 2012:
 - Supported housing
 - 81 independent rental apartments
 - 88 residents
 - Apartment size 19–36 m²
 - On site personnel by Salvation Army
 - 22 employees



Structural prevention with affordable social housing

- "We found public housing to be a very strong **protective factor** reducing risks of homelessness."
- "Approximately **73 per cent** of cases flowing into homelessness could be avoided if the vulnerable were placed in public housing."

Guy Johnson, Rosanna Scutella, Yi-Ping Tseng & Gavin Wood
(2018):

How do housing and labour markets affect individual homelessness?

Housing Studies DOI:10.1080/02673037.2018.1520819

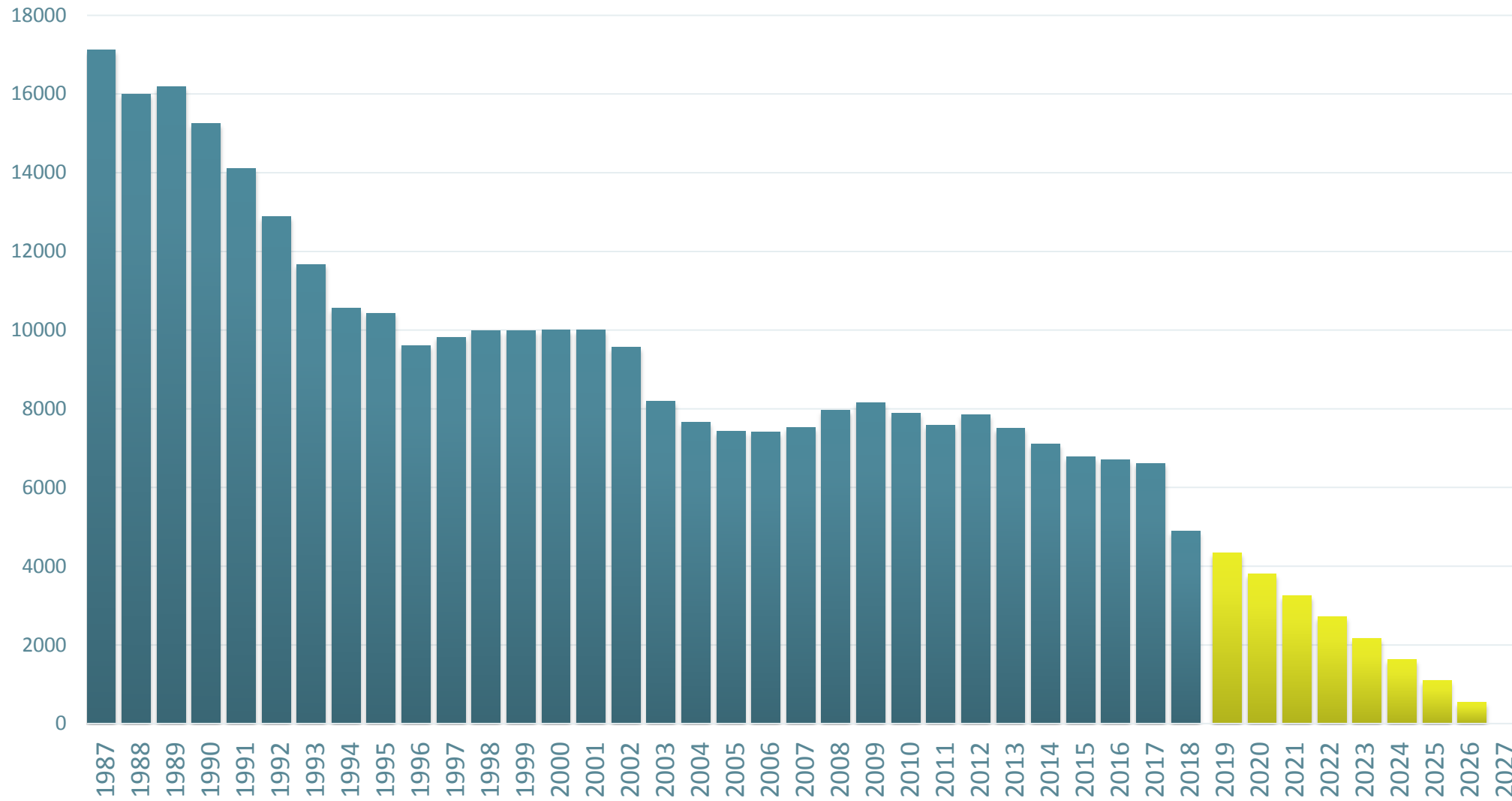
How to end homelessness?

- **Housing First** as the mainstream policy, as a systemic model
- **From temporary to permanent** housing solutions
- **Alternative** housing solutions and tailor-made support
- **Affordable** social housing (structural prevention)
- Method of implementation:
 - Wide partnership
 - Concrete measurable quantitative goals
 - Short timespan from decision to execution
- General housing benefit

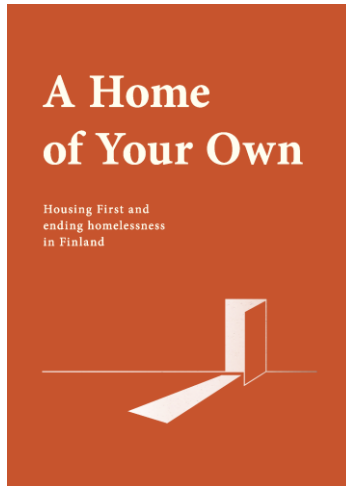
Elements and criteria of systemic Housing First

- **Integration and commitment:**
- National policy/programme involving all key actors:
- State and local authorities +NGOs (different sectors: housing, social and health, employment, criminal justice)
- **Prevention:**
- Level of affordable social housing
- Share of housing benefits of total social protection
- Housing advisory services
- **Ending homelessness:**
- Share of temporary accommodation of total housing supply for HF
- Number of support personnel in relation to flats in HF

Homelessness in Finland 1987-2027



Thank you!



*A Home of Your Own – Housing
First and ending homelessness in
Finland*

Download for free:
ysaatio.fi/the-book

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*Homelessness in 2030 – Essays
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