



HOMELESSNESS WORK IN FINLAND

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Homelessness policies in Finland

- Finland is the only country in the European Union where the number of homeless people has declined in recent years.
- This is mainly thanks to a carefully planned, comprehensive cooperation strategy we call 'Housing First'
- Traditionally, housing has been seen as the final goal of a social-recovery process. Housing First shifts this paradigm and puts housing at the top of the list, that is, as the first step in helping homeless people to get back on their feet.
- Finland has been implementing modern homelessness policies ever since the 1980s. From 2008 onwards, with the adoption of the Housing First principles, we have experienced a real breakthrough because of early intervention in preventing long-term homelessness.

Government support for housing



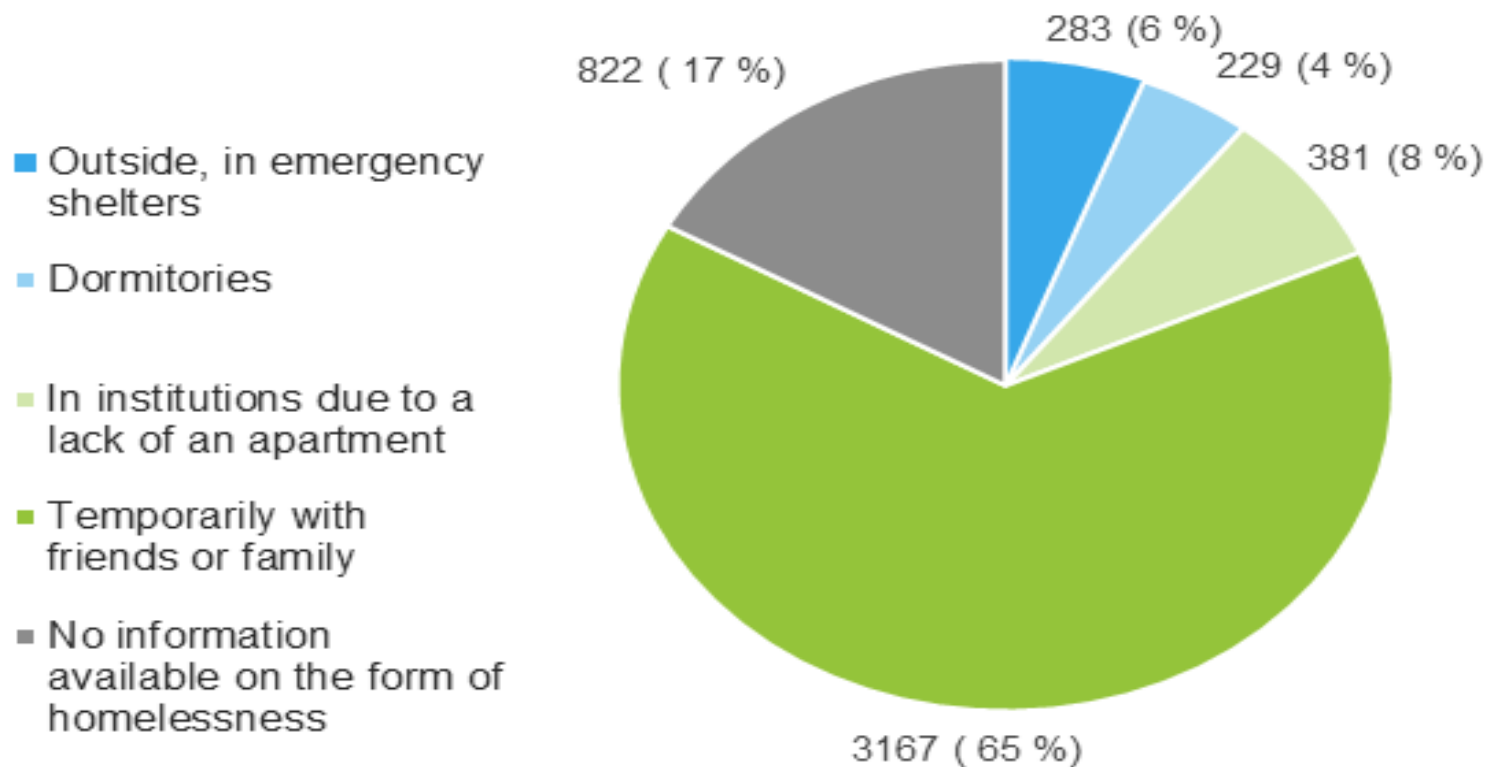
- There is about 3 million apartments in Finland and about every third of them has been constructed using state subsidies. (ARA construction).
- Because a social element is involved in the building stock subsidised by the state, the use and handover of these homes has been limited. The basic premise of state-subsidised housing has been the provision of safe housing conditions for residents, at a reasonable cost.
- **Economical Support for housing expenses is granted as Housing assistance and Social assistance at the individual level**
- Housing assistance can be granted for various types of housing in which beneficiaries live on a permanent basis.
- The general housing allowance is intended to help low-income households with their housing costs.
- Housing allowance is paid yearly 2 billion euros.
- Social assistance is the last-resort form of financial assistance. Its amount is based on the client's essential expenses, for example housing costs up to a reasonable amount.
- At the year 2018 Social assistance was paid about 811 million euros and about half of it was granted for housing expenses

Homelessness work in Finland

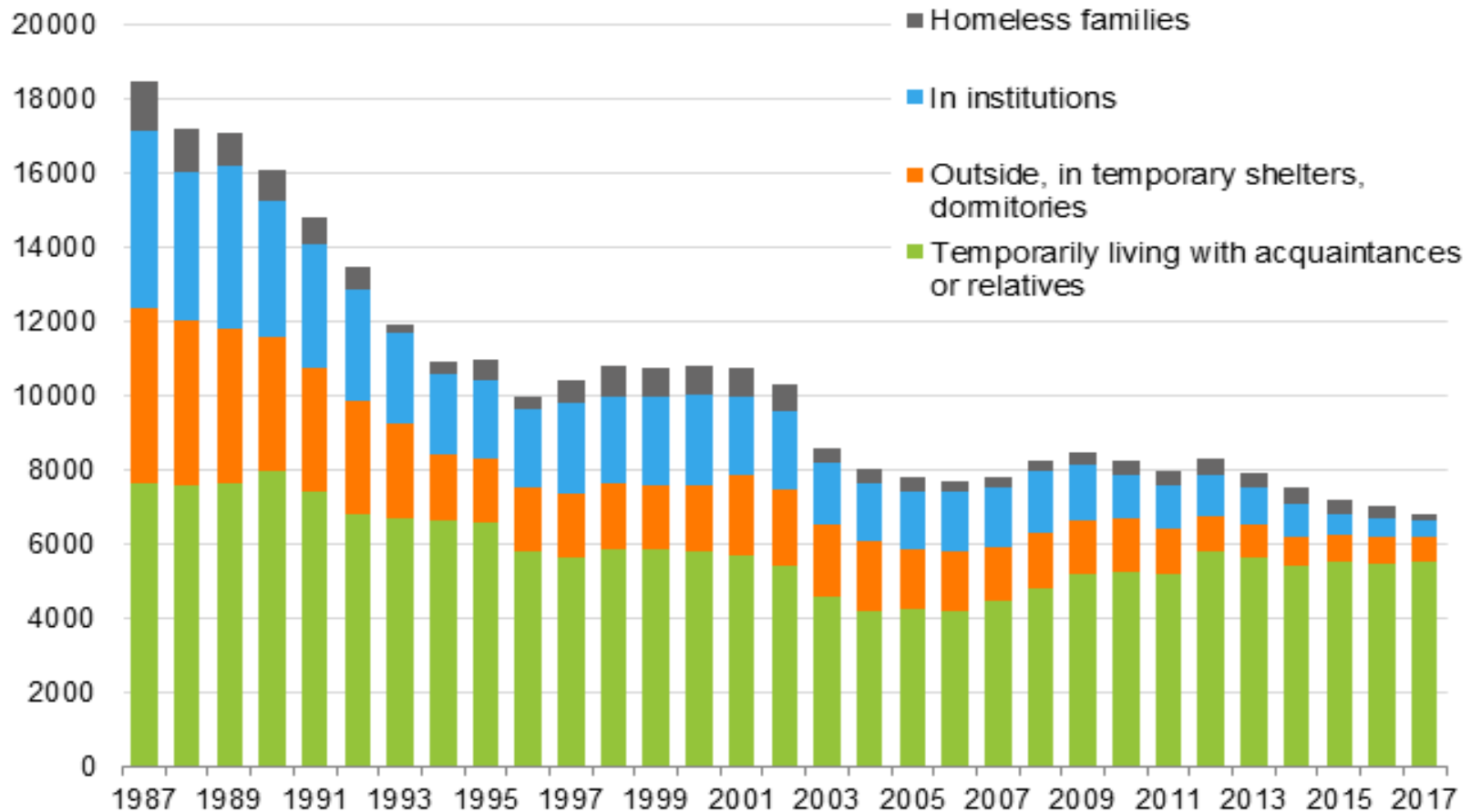


- Preventing homelessness is a way of preventing social exclusion
- It is important to ensure, that both housing policy and social policy are involved in facing the issue of homelessness.
- At the Governmental level homelessness programmes are administered by the Ministry of Environment
- The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is responsible for the development of social and health services and benefits
- Cross-sectoral co-operation and common strategies are needed in national and in local level.

At the end of 2018, there were about 5,500 homeless people in Finland. Of these 1,162 were long-term homeless. There were 159 homeless families. Over half (55 %) of all homeless people in Finland were located in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area



The number of homeless people in Finland has decreased. In 2016, overall homelessness decreased for the first time to fewer than 7,000 people.



3 principles behind programmes to reduce long-term homelessness



1. We have an ethical duty to provide a decent standard of living and environment for homeless people
2. Both national legislation and international agreements require Finnish public authorities to address the problem of homelessness.
3. Reducing homelessness is an economically rational endeavour, because it reduces health care and social welfare costs.

Clear responsibilities were defined on the level of the central government



- Ministry of the Environment is the lead coordinator, in collaboration with the Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA) and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
- Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA) has directed funding to third-sector organisations for projects and for buying apartments from the market and renting them to homeless people
- During 2008–2019 State authorities and the ten largest Finnish cities concluded detailed agreements for concrete projects, such as site development, recruiting and training new staff, allocation of flats, commissioning and organising provision of services
- A cross-governmental and cross-sectoral operation network has helped to identify and address the multiple and distinctive needs of the long-term homeless

Housing First in Finland: Principles and Solutions



« Name on the door » :

There is a basic human need for privacy, a place of one's own, a home

A rental contract of one's own (not second-hand contract or temporary social contract)

A permanent housing allows other problems to be solved:

Non-drinking is not a requirement for permanent housing.

Separation of housing and services:

Individually tailored services based on an assessment of needs.

The solutions for homelessness cannot be temporary.

Conventional shelters and dormitory-type hostels are not anymore adequate solutions to homelessness:

Hostels were converted into supported housing units.

Evaluating homelessness programmes 2008 - 2019



- The three homelessness programmes have corresponded well to the prevailing needs in homelessness work.
- Different housing options must be available in municipalities, both in ordinary rental housing stock and in special housing units.
- The implementation and effectiveness of the Housing First model is hampered notably by the lack of support services needed in ordinary housing.

Government Cooperation Programme to Halve Homelessness 2020–2022



The key objective is to strengthen the homelessness work of local authorities

- developing low threshold social- and healthcare services for homeless
- by allocating more affordable housing for people at risk of homelessness
- Municipalities set up cooperation networks at local level
- Homelessness work will be established as part of the core activities of municipalities

Thank you!

More information

<https://ysaatio.fi/en/housing-first-finland>

<https://ysaatio.fi/en/housing-first-finland/a-home-of-your-own-handbook>

<https://housingfirsteurope.eu/countries/finland/>

https://www.ara.fi/en-US/Materials/Homelessness_reports

[https://www.ym.fi/en-US/Housing/Programmes and strategies/Homelessness Programmes of Finland](https://www.ym.fi/en-US/Housing/Programmes_and_strategies/Homelessness_Programmes_of_Finland)

<https://stm.fi/en/social-and-health-services>

