



FINLAND

FEANTSA

KEY STATISTICS

The Housing Finance and Development Centre (ARA) conducts an annual national survey on homelessness¹. The data collected on the 15th of November 2015 show a decrease in the number of single homeless people (6,785). The number of homeless families remained almost the same (424) compared to the previous year. Homelessness is concentrated in the capital city area: most single homeless people (4 320) and homeless families (280) live in Helsinki.

The ARA survey covers a variety of living situations:

- People sleeping rough or in emergency accommodation (ETHOS 1.1 and 2.1): 411
- People living in homeless hostels (ETHOS 3.1): 355
- People living in institutions (ETHOS 6.2): 516
- People living with relatives or friends (ETHOS 8.1): 5,503

INCREASE/DECREASE IN NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

At the end of the 1980s, there were almost 20,000 homeless people in Finland. In the 2015 count this had fallen to 6 785 single homeless people and the number of homeless people had decreased by 322 from previous year.

CHANGE IN PROFILE OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

Homeless people living temporarily with relatives or friends are the largest group of homeless people in Finland and this share has further increased compared to the previous year. In 2015 81 % of single homeless and 73 % of long-term homeless people belonged to this group. This reflects the tight housing market and lack of affordable rental housing especially in Helsinki region.

27% of single homeless people had immigrant background at the end of 2015. Even though their number had decreased in

¹ [http://www.ara.fi/fi-Fi/ARAtietopankki/Tilastot_ja_selvitykset/Asunnottomuus/Asunnottomat_2015\(38041\)](http://www.ara.fi/fi-Fi/ARAtietopankki/Tilastot_ja_selvitykset/Asunnottomuus/Asunnottomat_2015(38041))

2014 there again was a rapid increase by almost 400 people in the next count. 54 % of homeless families were immigrant families. The number of long-term homeless people decreased by 8 % but the number of long-term homeless migrants increased by 22 %. There was slight increase in youth homelessness: almost 25 % of single homeless people are youngsters under 25 years of age. The number of homeless women decreased by 9 % to 1 496 people.

NATIONAL STRATEGY:

Action Plan for Preventing Homelessness in Finland 2016-2019²

After two national policy programs targeting on reducing long-term homelessness (PAAVO I and II in 2008-2015), a new policy program focusing on prevention was decided by the Finnish Government in June 2016.

During PAAVO, focus was in arranging permanent housing and support for most vulnerable homeless people. New housing was built and arranged, service models were developed and hostels were converted into supported housing units with independent flats and on-site services. The program targeted 11 cities with highest numbers of homeless people and it was based on the Housing First approach. Homelessness decreased, also long-term homelessness by 1 345 persons (35 %).

The new Action Plan for Preventing Homelessness emphasises early recognition of the risk of becoming homeless and rapid intervention when a person is at risk or has recently become homeless. The goal of the action plan is to link the work on homelessness more extensively to the whole of the work on preventing social exclusion based on the Housing First principle. In practice, this means ensuring that housing is secured whenever the client is met in the service system.

Scope

The main focus is in 10 cities signing the agreement with the state. Programme work is also done with cities, in which homelessness is at risk of increasing and which authorities are

² http://www.ym.fi/en-US/Housing/Programmes_and_strategies/Actionplan_for_preventing_homelessness

motivated to cooperate in preventing homelessness. In the joint development work, other municipalities and organizations are able to be involved too, through training and various networks.

Objectives

The main goal is to continue to reduce homelessness. In order to reach this goal, it is necessary to strengthen prevention of homelessness and prevent recurrence of homelessness. The plan includes allocating 2,500 new dwellings or places in housing to the homeless or people at risk of becoming homeless.

Besides housing, the action plan includes 15 targeted measures to prevent homelessness. Under the coordination by ARA, new strategies to prevent homelessness will be implemented in 6 cities. The threat of losing housing is prevented for households experiencing financial difficulties and access to housing is made easier for those who have lost their credit rating. Housing guidance services as well as low-threshold services are strengthened and transition from institutions/housing services to independent housing is secured. Service development and participation of service users are promoted. The proposed measures aim to renew the service system related to dealing with homelessness so that it becomes more client-oriented, preventative and cost-efficient.

Resources

The cost estimate for the action plan is €78 million. The share of investments (construction, procurement and rental) is approximately €54 million, and the share of service development and coordination is approximately €24 million in total. Funding is gathered from several separate sources by using project funding, investment and development aid, funding from ministries' budgets, as well as other funding instruments. It is estimated that the share of STEA, the Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations³ during the programme period is approximately €23.6 million, and the share of cities is approximately €6 million. The program's funding is secured.

Governance

The programme is implemented as cooperation between the state, cities, organisations, and service providers. The Ministry of the Environment is responsible for the management of the programme in close cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, as well as the Ministry of the Interior.

The Ministry of the Environment appointed a steering group for the programme from among the representatives of ministries, funders, cities, NGOs and other organisations. A smaller coordination group from the programme's responsible employees prepares and implements the decisions of the

steering group and takes care of the day-to-day business of the programme. Joint development is coordinated by the programme director together with the Networking project coordinated by Y-Foundation and implemented together by several organisations.

The state draws up agreements for the programme period with cities and interested peri-urban municipalities, in which measures for preventing homelessness, combating homelessness and principles for joint development are specified.

TARGETED PREVENTION

Prevention of homelessness was included in the previous national programs on homelessness. Yet, to succeed in the target of ending homelessness, it is obvious that prevention must be at the centre of the work. Approximately 400 homelessness services' clients became homeless again from 2012 to 2015. In addition, new people are becoming homeless due to problems such as financial issues and more and more immigrants are in vulnerable position on the housing market. The organisation of housing, social, health care and employment services that has been divided into sectors does not support the early identification and prevention of homelessness sufficiently; instead, at worst it even causes repeated homelessness and slows down the transition to independent living and working life. That's why a multidisciplinary cooperation programme with resources is needed to solve the issues.

HOUSING-LED APPROACHES

Housing First is the main principal underpinning the strategy. Increasing the production of reasonably priced housing and diversifying the housing available to homeless people are key elements in the action plan. The effectiveness of utilising state subsidized rental housing stock in housing homeless people will be increased. In order to develop forms of housing, new kinds of construction and experimental projects are started for young people, students and asylum seekers who have received a residence permit.

³ Until the end of 2016 called RAY, Finland's Slot Machine Association.

REMARKS ON RESEARCH

The strategy is evidence-based. There is a developing evidence-base about the effectiveness, including cost-effectiveness of housing counselling services and supported housing compared to previous solutions. In 2014 an international research evaluation of the national programme was carried out and the results are taken into account in planning the action plan⁴.

REMARKS ON KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

Positive

Overall policy shift from the staircase model towards housing-led solutions, which has provided a framework within which homeless people can benefit better from the general service system.

No street homelessness.

No shelters in larger cities.

Decreasing homelessness.

Negative

Lack of affordable rental housing especially in the metropolitan region.

Increase in immigrant homelessness. Also the number of paperless migrants is estimated to rise.

⁴ [http://www.ymparisto.fi/en-US/Housing/International_study_Finland_is_a_leading\(32702\)](http://www.ymparisto.fi/en-US/Housing/International_study_Finland_is_a_leading(32702))