Housing First for Youth (HF4Y) as an opportunity for social justice among young people

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Background:

- Distinction between young homeless people from adults.
- Youth as "age of transition"
- Housing first philosophy with "5 core principles"
- First appearance of the HF4Y program model and guide in 2014 in North America.
- Housing stability and overall well-being under 25 years old.
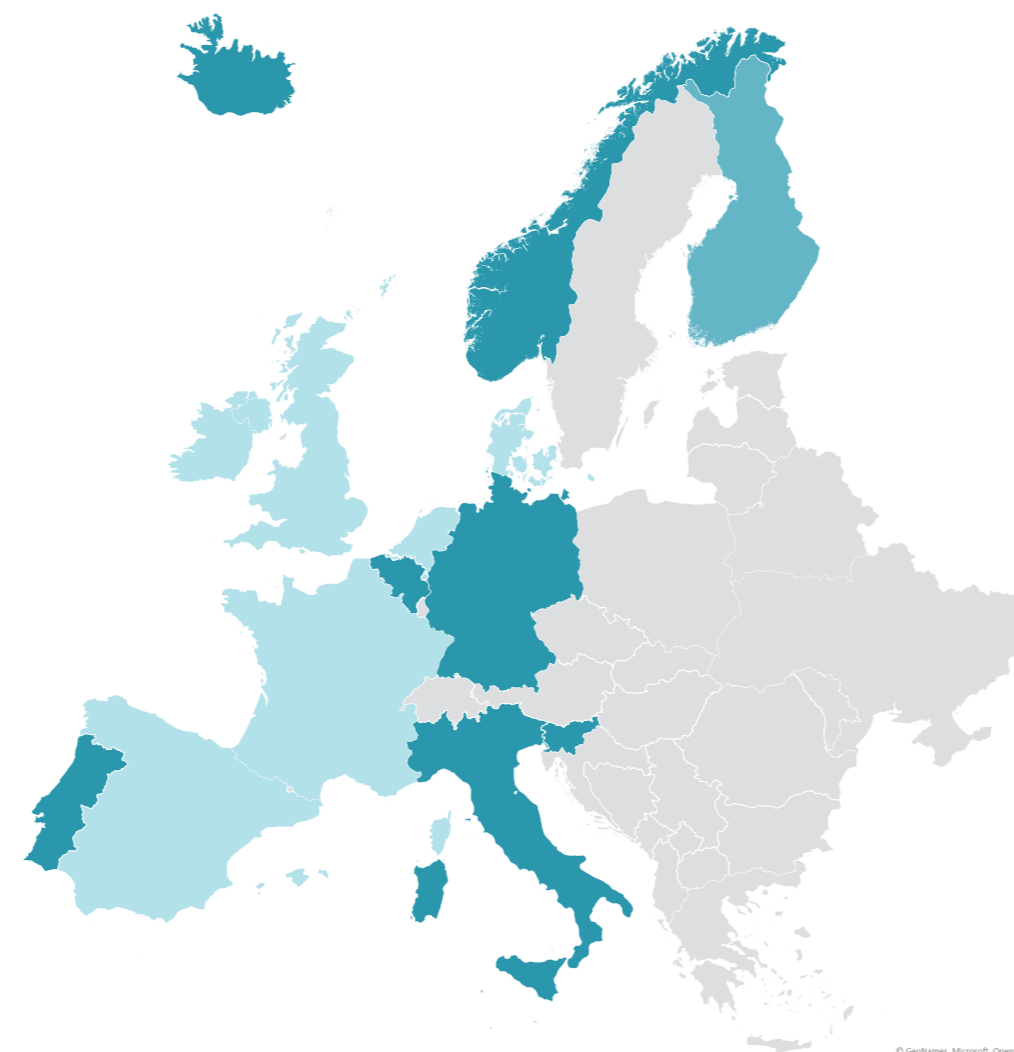- The increase of new HF4Y implementations by social services providers is now discussed also in Europe.

Context:

- Lack of research in the European context about implementations' fidelity, impact, and evaluations.
- Complexity of European context.
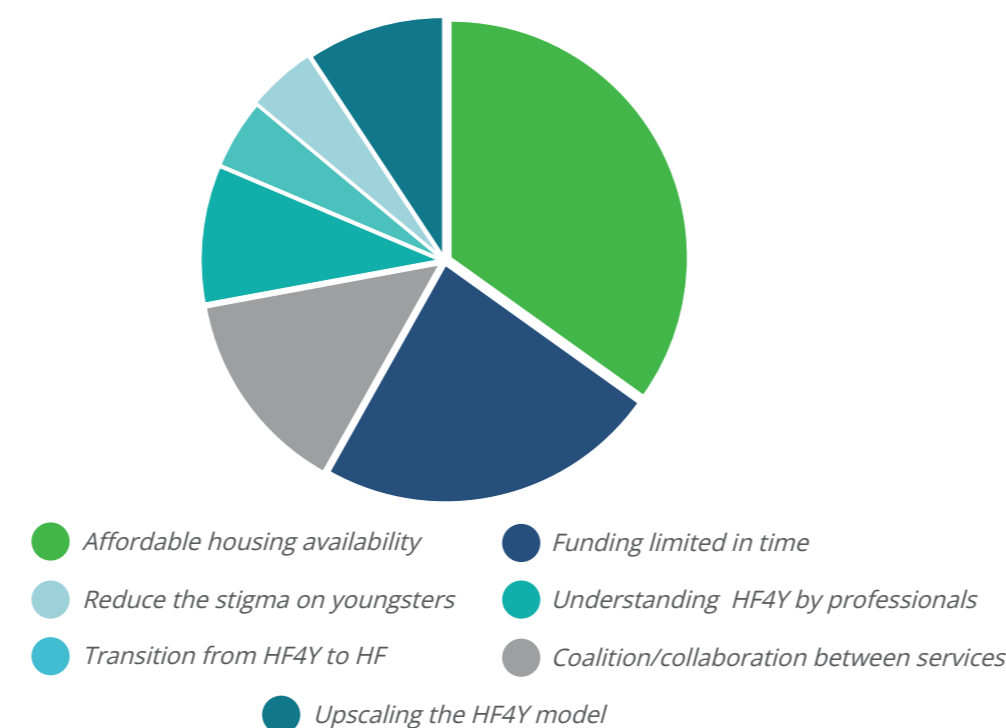- Housing system crisis, with rising inequalities, speculations, and poverty.

Methods:

- Review on youth homelessness, housing first, HF4Y, and online methods for explorative interviews.
- Qualitative semi-structured interviews online.
- 28 participants: professionals from private and public entities.
- Housing system crisis, with rising inequalities, speculations, and poverty.

Countries involved in the study

Main challenges for organisations highlighted during interviews

- Affordable housing availability
- Reduce the stigma on youngsters
- Transition from HF4Y to HF
- Funding limited in time
- Understanding HF4Y by professionals
- Coalition/collaboration between services
- Upscaling the HF4Y model

Core principles:

1. Right to housing without preconditions.
2. Youth choice, youth voice, and self-determination.
3. Positive youth development and wellness orientation.
4. Individualized, client-driven supports with no time limits.
5. Social inclusion and community integration.

Goals:

The primary objectives of this empirical study were to systematically investigate the implementation of "Housing First for Youth" (HF4Y) interventions across various European countries, examining their impact, as well as assessing their fidelity to the original program model. Furthermore, we aimed to conduct a rigorous comparative analysis of the findings from diverse countries.

Findings:

- Social and housing policies impact on implementations shaping the projects.
- Lack of availability of affordable housing in the housing crisis.
- Majority of projects are pilot.
- No systematic understanding of the core principles by front-line workers.
- The adaptation of the model reflects partly the original model.
- Social workers play a fundamental role

Conclusions:

- Need for policies dedicated to youngsters, to guarantee a stable income, fundamental for maintaining accommodation, reducing precariousness, and exiting homelessness.
- There is no housing first for youth if there is affordable housing available.
- There is a need for systematicity.
- Implementation with a focus on the complex variety of European countries.