



Ympäristöministeriö
Miljöministeriet
Ministry of the Environment

Strategies to Reduce Homelessness in Finland

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Presentation

1. History
2. Definitions
3. Programme to Reduce Long-term Homelessness (2008 – 2015) and breakthrough of Housing First
4. Government Action Programme to Prevent Homelessness (2016 – 2019)

Minister Vapaavuori (Finland, 2016)

” We changed our mind setting: starting point in Housing First – principal is that first of all you have to provide for a person with many problems a permanent apartment, home, which brings better opportunities to solve other problems.

We took also a strong operative attitude in implementing the programme. We made contract with biggest cities on several thousand new flats, integrated housing and social and health care services in the same complex, we were determined to make a big transformation and we were quick in intervening in slips”

Definitions of Homeless Persons

HOMELESSNESS

- People staying outdoors, staircases, night shelters etc.
- People living in other shelters or hostels or boarding houses for homeless people
- People living in care homes or other dwellings of social welfare authorities, rehabilitation homes or hospitals due to lack of housing
- Prisoners soon to be released who have no housing
- People living temporarily with relatives and acquaintances due to lack of housing (the majority of the homeless)
- Families and couples who have split up or are living in temporary housing due to lack of housing

LONG-TERM HOMELESSNESS

- A person is defined as being long-term homeless if he/she has continued to remain without a fixed abode or have been placed under threat of an extended period without a fixed abode as a result of social or health-related factors for more than one year or they have repeatedly experienced homelessness over the course of a three-year period.

HISTORY OF HOMELESSNESS – PATH DEPENDENCIES, CONTINUITY, DISRUPTIONS

▪AFTER THE WAR

The storage and control of an anonymous marginal group (1945 – end of 1950's)

▪TRANSFORMATION PERIOD

Homelessness recognized as a societal question (1960's- end of 1970's)

▪STRUCTURAL CHANGE – FORMATION OF MODERN HOMELESSNESS POLICY

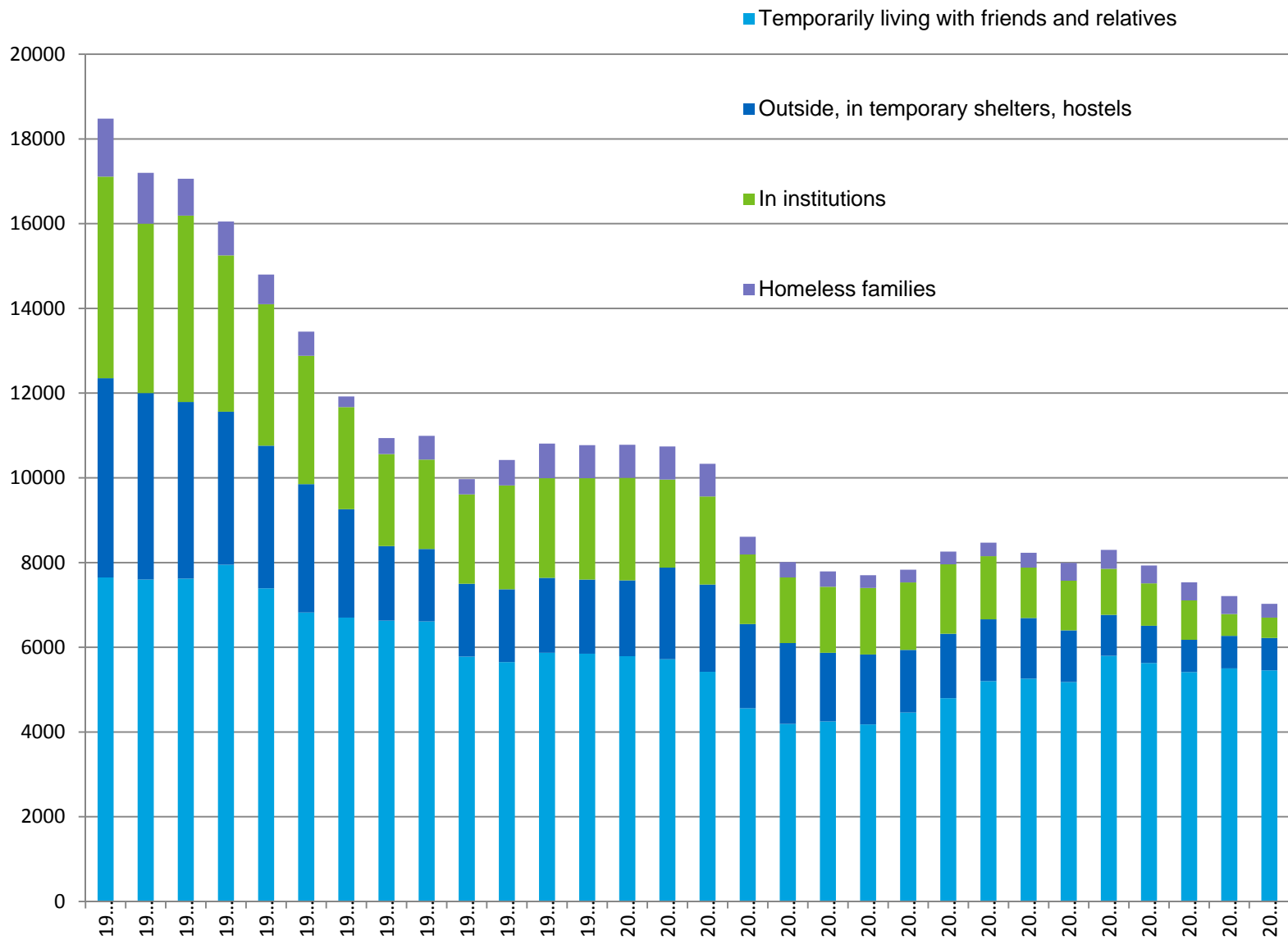
Homelessness addressed by both general and special instruments of housing and social policies (middle of 1980's – 2005)

▪NEW TRANSFORMATION PERIOD – BREAKTHROUGH OF HOUSING FIRST (2008-2015)

Housing First – mainstreaming early Intervention and prevention of homelessness

STRUCTURAL CHANGE – FORMATION OF MODERN HOMELESSNESS POLICY

- For the first time a goal of government programme (1987-1991) was set to abolish homelessness until 1991, formulated also in the national plans of housing and social and health care
- More extensive and centralized role of the municipalities (obligatory local housing programmes)
- Catalytic initiatives of new actors – Y-foundation, Diaconia Institute, Church, A-clinics, Settlement movement, Associations (Youth housing, Mental patients, Homeless etc)



PROGRAMME TO REDUCE LONG-TERM HOMELESSNESS (2008 – 2015)

- BREAKTHROUGH OF HOUSING FIRST

BACKGROUND

- Major lesson learnt from previous programmes and initiatives was that there remained more or less the problem of long-term homelessness
- Homeless people, who needed additional support and services in order to cope in everyday housing and living.
- But the existing provision of accommodation would not be enough and there was a momentum for new solutions

VISION – GROUP OF WISE

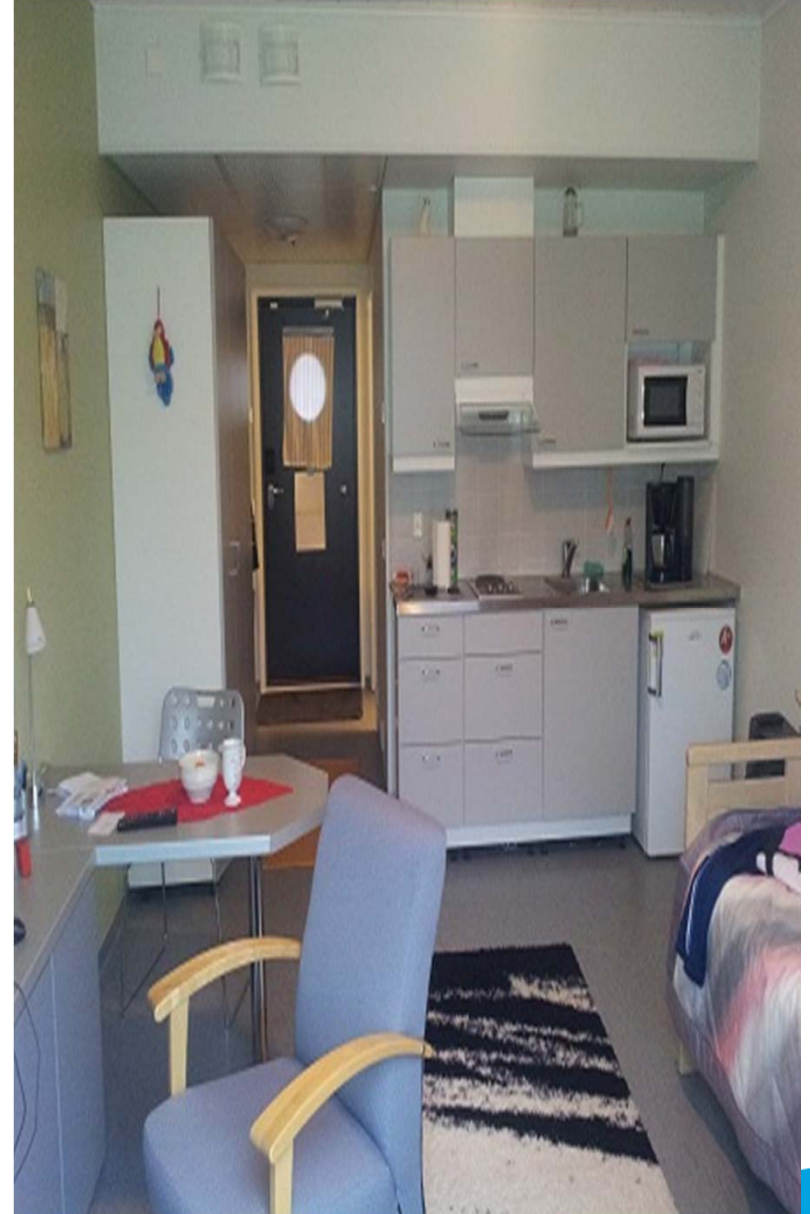
- The group outlined three core principles for the programme.
- First is the ethical duty to provide a decent standard of living and environment to homeless people.
- Second, both national legislation and international agreements require Finnish public authorities to address the problem of homelessness.
- Third, reducing homelessness is an economically rational endeavour, because it reduces social and health care costs.

COMMITMENT (I)

- Clear responsibilities were defined on the level of the central government
 - the Ministry of Environment, responsible for housing policies and lead coordinator of the programme
 - Finance and Development Centre for Housing (ARA), directed interest-subsidy loans and grants (max 50 % of approved costs) to projects approved in letters of intent with cities
 - the Ministry of Health and Social Services, directed grants (50 % of costs) to local authorities in order to recruit personal for for new housing units (social workers etc.)
 - Slott-Machine Associations directed funding to third sector organisations for projects and for buying appartements from the market and renting them to homeless persons
 - Ministry of Justice and a national agencies responsible for the criminal sanction system

COMMITMENT (II)

- The programme was implemented by letters of intent between State authorities and the ten largest Finnish cities, in which detailed agreements were laid down on the concrete projects planned and funded in the relevant city.
- Housing First-principals and "earmarked" state funding had the effect that commitments of cities in implementing the programme has been very high in planning and decision making of all new housing units and projects, site development, recruiting and training new staff, allocation of flats, commissioning and organising service provision
- Public funding directed to the programme has been during eight years (2008 – 2015) about 240 M€ (30 M€ yearly)



COMMITMENT (III)

- All relevant actors in the implementation process of the programme were brought together and formed into an operational network.
- This approach to service provision and housing assistance was underpinned by cross-governmental and cross-sectoral collaboration and learning.
- This made it possible to better identify and address the multiple and distinctive needs of the long-term homeless.



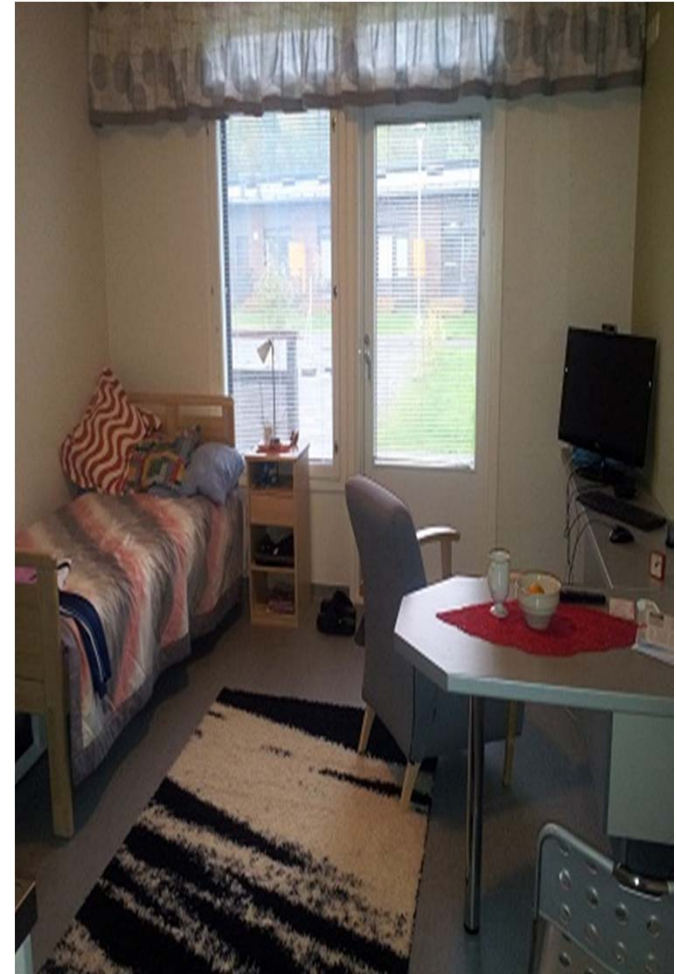
Main results

- Housing First has been implemented in all cities working with long-term homelessness. Piloting HF for youth homelessness is under planning.
- Shelters have been renovated and replaced by housing units based on supported rental housing.
- Long-term homelessness has decreased (2008 – 2015) by 1,345 persons (35%).
- In 2016, overall homelessness decreased for the first time to fewer than 7,000 people.
- Finland is the only EU country in which homelessness continues to decrease despite the economic recession and social pressures.



Action Plan for Preventing Homelessness in Finland 2016–2019

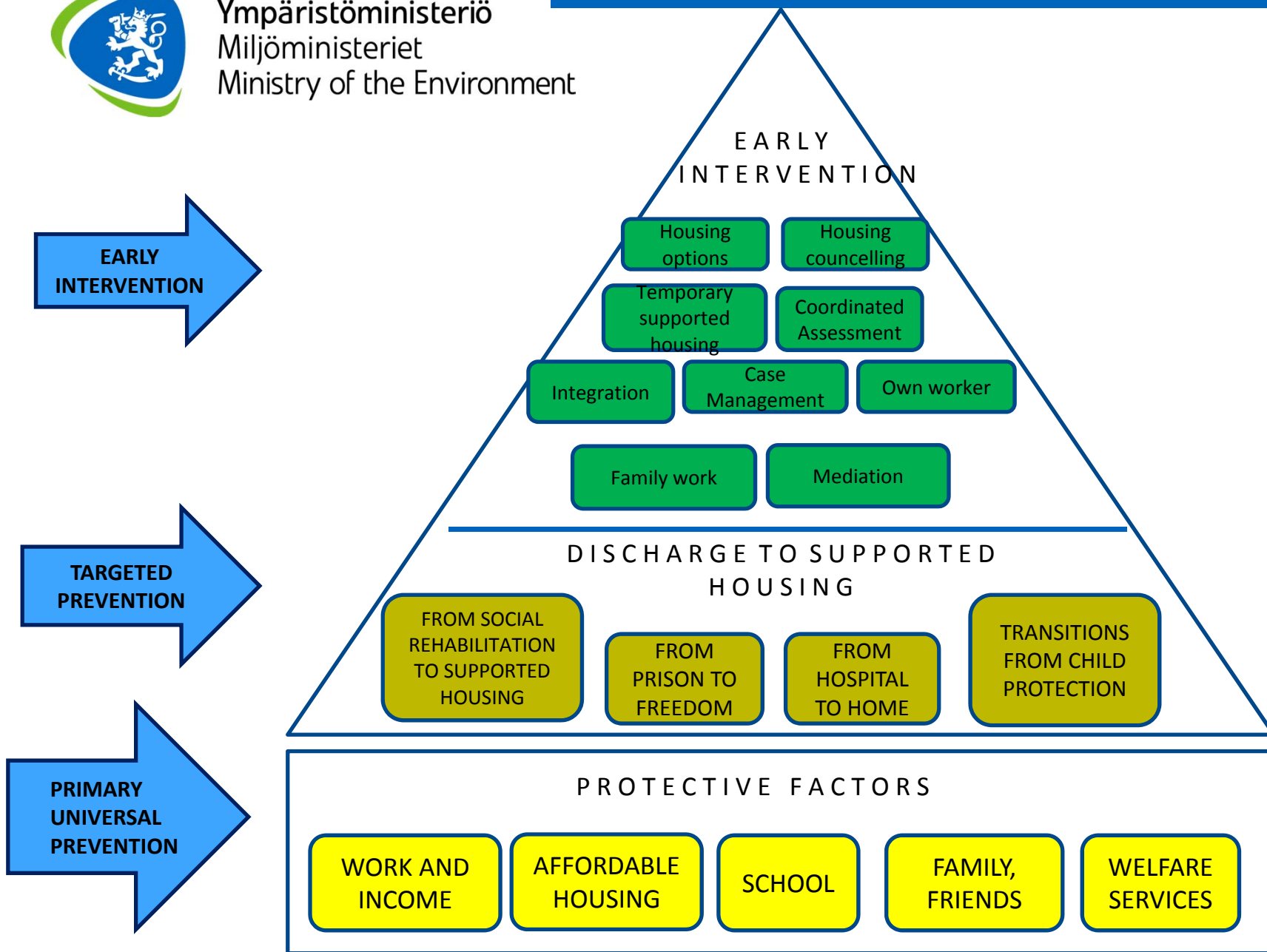
- The goal is to ensure that housing is secured whenever the client is met in the service system.
- The target group of the programme includes people who have recently become homeless and those who have been homeless for longer periods,
 - young people or families overburdened by debt or
 - at risk of eviction,
 - young people leaving their childhood home for independent life,
 - people undergoing mental health and/or substance abuse rehabilitation
 - child welfare after-care service clients,
 - asylum seekers who have received a residence permit but have failed to integrate,
 - homeless released prisoners or prisoners going on parole.





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Preventing Homelessness - Framework



HOUSING FIRST – ACTION PROGRAMME TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS IN FINLAND 2016 - 2019

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Social Housing
Production

Aquisition of Rental
Accomodation

Social Lettings of
Private Rental Flats

From Office to Housing,
Red Cottages

DIFFUSING AND IMPLEMENTING WORKABLE SOLUTIONS

Low Threshold Service
Centres

Prevention of Recidivism

Harm Reduction in
Substance Abuse
Counseling Services

Experts on Homelessness

Enlarging Housing
Councelling

NEW SOLUTIONS – TESTING AND PILOTING

Acces to Housing for
Persons with Rent Arrears
and Depts

Paths to Working Life for ex-
Homeless Persons

Mobile Multiprofessional
Teams for Longterm
Homeless

Housing Services for
Immigrants and Refugees

Night Home for Young
Ones in Crises Situation

Housing First concepts and
applications

Co-Creation

Preventive strategies

	IDEAS & CONCEPTS	PILOTS & TESTING	PUT TO USE	SCALING & DIFFUSION
PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS				
Housing First Light support				
Housing Advice & Counselling				
Outreach work, Young persons				
Housing social care & Rehabilitation				
Multisectoral local Housing led networks				
Funding models, Public and private				
Low threshold Service centers				
Letter of Intent model				
Housing related Debt counselling				
Housing included in Youth guarantee				