



Housing and homelessness for ex-offenders in Finland

RETS-foundation - Life without crime
Mia Juselius

Why should we?

- marginal of marginal
- antisocial backgrounds / intergenerationalism
- learning difficulties / spectrum
- mental / substance abuse challenges

--> humanity, costs, safety

Desperation creates desperate actions.

Direction: Politics in Finland?

Life without crime is

- A non-governmental organisation (NGO) founded in 2001
- Long historical roots from the 19th century
- A national expert organisation and service provider
- Current number of personell ~50



Funding

- Income from (real estate) stocks owned by the foundation
- Funding from the state: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (Stea), Ministry of justice
- Selling services to wellbeing services counties, and the Prison and probation service
- Financial support from the city of Helsinki



What we do?

We support...

- Those with signs of criminal behavior
- Those convicted of crimes
- Their close ones



...by

- Providing a wide range of services (including peer support) in the community and in prisons.
- Distributing advice and information to clients and professionals.
- Coordinating professional networks for nation-wide collaboration.
- Influencing public debate, politics and legislation.



The purpose of our work

- Our clients get the support they need
- Their rights are fulfilled
- Recidivism is reduced





A decorative pattern on the left side of the slide, consisting of a grid of white symbols. The symbols include lowercase letters 'r', 'i', and 'f', along with hyphens and dots, arranged in a repeating pattern.

Homelessness and housing for ex-offenders in Finland

Statistics:

population 5,6 million ↗

homeless 3429 (HF) ↘

prisoners 3140 ↗

A man with a large, multi-pocketed backpack is walking away from the camera on a city sidewalk. The street is lined with parked cars and multi-story buildings. A pedestrian crossing sign is visible in the background. The scene is captured in a cinematic style with soft lighting.

Homelessness in Finland
Prison leavers % ?



30%

ROTI statistics 2023;

* Prison inmates: 14% homeless, BUT information missing on 38%

* All sentences: 11% homeless, but 60% lack of information!

VTH (Prison Health Care) - study: 6/10 said had no place after prison

Housing consulting

- Nationwide education and guidance to help released prisoners find suitable housing
- Link between the client, prison, wellbeing services county and organisations

Aim:

- Disseminate realistic information on housing options and practices
- Ensure the services client's going to need



To whom?

- prisoners threatened to release without housing
- homeless people with a criminal background who need support in housing and other aspects of life
- close ones

How?

- **Customers:** groups, meetings, infos (Housing Monopoly - game)
- **Networking:** VAT, YRE, Feantsa, Nordic homelessness
- **Advocacy:** Housing Cooperation Day, Night of the Homeless, Prison fair, advocacy networks
- **Communications:** Vacant housing - facebook, blogs



The most common
questions about housing
for those who are released



The most common questions

I am about to be released from prison, and I don't have a flat.

What should I do?



The most common questions

I would like to get away from the old corners and move somewhere else.

How can this be done?



The most common questions

I have lost my credit history and have been evicted from the previous apartment.

Does this affect the apartment intake?



The most common questions

I have found a suitable apartment on the private market. The rent is high, but I would pay the excess of the housing allowance itself.

Can this be done?



The most common questions

I'm getting released next week
and I don't have an apartment.

Where do I go?



The most common questions

I have an apartment and I'm going to judgment.

What things should I mind?



Why?

- Customers and staff are able to plan housing based on realistic and fact-based up-to-date information.
- **Homelessness and stigma of people with a criminal background will decrease, social equality will increase and support services will develop.**
- About 400 contacts per year, of which ~ 50 from close ones
- Success; attachment to the system and housing issues going forward

MIKÄ SINUSTA
TULEE ISONA?

MINUSTA TULEE
KÖYHÄ JA
ONNETON!

MUSTA
TULEE
PAKOLAINEN

MINÄ RYHDY
KÄYTTÄMÄÄN
PÄIHTEITÄ

MINUSTA TULEE
RIKOLLINEN

ISONA MINUSTA
TULEE
ASUNNOTON!



Need of:

- Wide-ranging support for coping with everyday life, housing and rehabilitation
- Closer cooperation between prisons, community sanctions offices, adult social work and support service providers. Work should begin already during imprisonment.

SENTENCE PLANNING !!!





RETS homes

Supported, scattered housing for ex-offenders



Supported housing

According to the Social Welfare Act (§21), supported housing is arranged for persons who need support in moving to or from independent living. Supported housing refers to supporting housing through social guidance and other social services.


Supported housing in RETS-homes

- Successful housing through social and service guidance.
- Working towards common goals
 - the need and amount of support agreed together with the social worker and the client before the service begins
- dedicated employee assigned to each customer

Housing First

- Our operations strive to follow the principles of the Housing First model
- Credit defaults are not an obstacle to finding housing
- Do not require substance abstinence
- Comply with the Tenancy Act → every tenant has a lease

Apartments

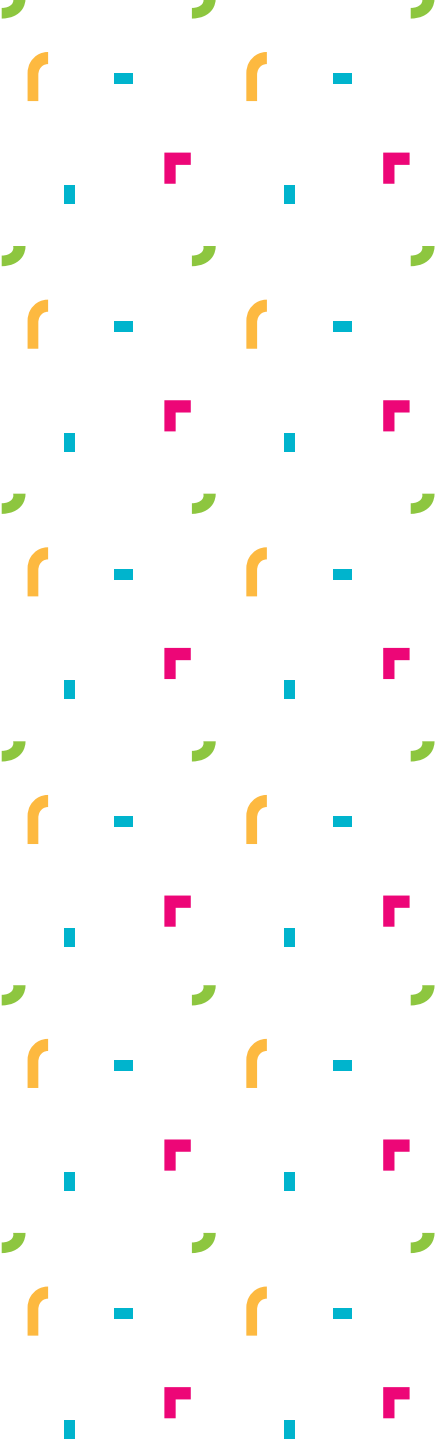
- 67  scattered rental dwellings in housing companies
- Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa
- Mainly studios, a few two-room apartments
- Rent level within the limits of housing costs approved by Kela

Getting the service

- The social worker grants a payment commitment to the service (wellbeing services county and/or municipality of residence) for the entire duration of the residence
- Municipal citizenship remains during supported housing
- Offering housing support services also for other landlords' apartments

Housing in RETS - homes

- Priority given to those released from prison as homeless and those on probationary release
- Apartments are offered on a case-by-case basis
- A security deposit from Kela based on an apartment offer (3 months rent)
- fixed-term leases (temporary housing)
- Regular home visits to support everyday life and successful living
- The apartments are unfurnished
- Pets welcome!



The goal is independent living in an ordinary rental apartment.

- cooperation with the Y-Foundation
- help with the transition permanent rental housing

Network for Housing Support for Vacated Persons (VAT)

Supporting together – sharing expertise



VAT-network

- Founded in 2010
- The network operates nationwide
- RETS coordinates the network
- The Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA) will be funded with lottery funds
- The network has more than 3,000 apartments across the country



Goals

- Reducing recidivism
- Reducing and preventing homelessness among people with a criminal sanctions background
- Advocacy and advocacy work
- Better identification of the special needs of people with a criminal sanctions background.
- Strengthening cooperation between wellbeing services counties, municipalities, the Criminal Sanctions Agency and organisations locally



What we do to achieve the goals?

- organise seminars, trainings and workshops in different localities to support the housing of people with a criminal background.
- build close cooperation between the wellbeing services counties, municipalities, Rise and third-sector service providers.
- offer support to professionals and people with experience in housing support work.
- collect information on good practices and cooperation models.
- produce informative material.
- participate in public debate to reduce homelessness among people with a criminal background, to develop support services and reduce stigma.





How about in your country?

Interested in networking?

Contact!

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