

# Tackling Structural Factors of Migrant Housing Exclusion in Finland:

**Lessons Learnt from Katto-project**

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# Outline of the Presentation

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- Homelessness: What's in a name and numbers?
- Poster-boy Finland: A Success Model and its Pitfalls
- Differentiated Risks and Barriers to Migrant Housing Inclusion
- Katto-project: Lessons Learnt
- Ways forward: Katto-program
- Recommendations
- Conclusion





# Homelessness: What's in a name and numbers?

- Finnish conception of homelessness includes all groups in ETHOS light
- Annual statistics since 1987
- 2014 to 2017: rises in women's, youth and migrant homelessness - overall homelessness in decline
- 2018: 25% of persons experiencing homelessness identified as women, 21% were under 30 years of age (youth) and 24% were migrants.





# Homelessness: What's in a name and numbers?

- Worrying trend outside Helsinki: migrant homelessness on the rise
- Overall, migrants are significantly overrepresented in the homelessness statistics
- **Statistical pitfalls:**
  - No data on "migrants", a proxy is used
  - Irregular migrants are not included
  - Lack of intersectional perspective
    - the overlap of current categories unknown
    - Lack of data on other marginalised groups
    - Housing exclusion
    - Hidden homelessness





# Poster-boy Finland: A Success Model and its Pitfalls

- Long history of work countering homelessness
- From staircase model to Housing First model
- Political goal: to cut the number of persons experiencing homelessness in half by 2022, and eradicate homelessness by 2026
- Due to historical reasons, Housing First currently caters better to Finnish middle aged men with substance abuse and/or mental health issues





# Differentiated Risks and Barriers to Migrant Housing Inclusion

- Overall risks are similar to the dominant society
- Added risk through language barriers and lack of knowledge about the system (i.e. finding the right services)
- Lack of knowledge → vulnerable to shady actors
- Discrimination on the housing market
- Heterogenous group



The logo for Katto-project features a stylized house shape composed of four curved segments in yellow, red, blue, and green.

# Katto-project

- 3-year project (2016-2019)
- Funded by Finland's Slot Machine Association / Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA)
- Based on mapping paper by Moniheli
- Objective: prevent homelessness among migrants
- Only project targeting migrants as a broader group





# Katto-project: Lessons Learnt

- Tackling lack of information and circulation of wrong information
  - conception of s.c. info-visits
    - Info-visits: 2-3h information sessions on housing issues for migrants in e.g. integration classes or peer support groups
    - In 2017, approximately 1000 migrants were reached
  - "Seeking Information – What you should know"-Information material
    - Distribution of information material in different languages
- Tackling shady activity on the housing market
  - Info-visits featuring information on tenants' rights
  - „Beware of shady real estate agents“ information material







# Katto-project: Lessons Learnt

- Need for interculturally trained housing counsellors
  - Trainings for professionals
- Other activities:
  - Fire safety trainings
  - Peer support
  - Counselling
  - Events (a sub-event of the Night of the Homeless focussing on migrant housing exclusion)
  - Co-produced a guidebook for journalists writing about homelessness





# Ways forward: Katto-program

- Katto-program is the continuation of Katto-project
- Permanent funding from STEA
- More holistic approach to fulfill the objective of preventing homelessness among migrants
- Four main areas of work
  - Trainings
  - Client work
  - Advocacy
  - Stakeholder Cooperation





# Ways forward: Katto-program

- Trainings
  - Info-visits
  - Training professionals
  - Fire safety trainings
- Client work
  - Hands on, culturally sensitive assistance for housing issues
  - Pop-up counselling
- Advocacy
  - Main focus: bringing the migrant perspective to the public discourse on homelessness
- Stakeholder cooperation
  - Variety of activities to strengthen cooperation focussing on issues specific to migrants





# Recommendations

- In order to have a more comprehensive understanding of homelessness, we recommend more detailed and intersectional data on persons who experience homelessness should be made accessible to those working on the issue.
- In order to tackle housing inclusion, especially discrimination, equality data should be gathered by a non-state actor, following guidelines of the European Network Against Racism
- In order to tackle shady actors, more information on the issue should be distributed efficiently to migrants in different languages and via different media.





# Recommendations

- In order to respond to the growing number of migrants facing housing issues and exclusion, service providers in the housing sector and social workers should be required to participate in cultural sensitivity and anti-discrimination trainings.
- In order to eradicate homelessness, the Housing First Model should include different pathways, so that it serves migrants, women, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, youth, former prisoners, those with and without substance abuse issues alike.
- With the success the Housing First model and experience value has brought, Finnish actors should be cautious of falling into pitfalls of Nordic/Finnish exceptionalism such as omitting the shortcomings of the current model in lieu of tackling them head-on.



# Conclusion

- Political will and unison are the root of the Finnish Success Model
- Understanding of Housing First should be broadened, to avoid persons from falling through the cracks
- Good practices of Katto-project can be used/appropriated when working with different marginalised groups