



ARKKITEHTUURIMUSEO  
FINLANDS ARKITEKTURMUSEUM  
MUSEUM OF FINNISH ARCHITECTURE

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## **COMPETITION BRIEF**

***FROM BORDER TO HOME***  
***Housing solutions for asylum-seekers***

**October 19 – November 30, 2015**



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## COMPETITION TIME TABLE

**October 19, 2015** Seminar and the Official Presentation of the Competition Brief

**November 16, 2015, no later than 4.00 pm:** Inquiries to the jury in Finnish, Swedish or English (4.2)

**November 23, 2015:** A question-and-answer log will be posted on the Museum of Finnish Architecture's website (4.2)

**November 23, 2015 by midnight:** Registration is by email: [competitions@mfa.fi](mailto:competitions@mfa.fi). (3.3)

**November 30, 2015 by midnight:** Competition entries are to be submitted electronically to the Museum of Finnish Architecture (6.2)

**December 14, 2015:** The results will be announced at a ceremony hosted by the Museum of Finnish Architecture between 10.00 am and noon (4.3)



## 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE BRIEF

### ***From Border to Home – housing solutions for asylum-seekers, October 19 – November 30, 2015***

The Museum of Finnish Architecture, in collaboration with the Finnish Association of Architects (SAFA), is organizing an open architectural competition for the design of temporary housing for asylum-seekers awaiting a decision on their refugee status. The proposals are intended to serve as a temporary solution prior to their finding permanent housing in Finland. The solution should support the integration of asylum-seekers into Finnish society and their acculturation in the local community as well as offer a positive first experience of living in Finland.

The competition aims to produce tangible solutions for housing asylum-seekers in Nordic society and the cold northern climate. The submissions will form the basis of an exhibition to be staged in the Finnish Pavilion at the forthcoming Venice Architecture Biennale in 2016. The exhibition will be co-produced by the Museum of Finnish Architecture and the Architecture Information Centre Finland. The theme of the forthcoming biennale curated by Chilean architect Alejandro Aravena – *Reporting from the Front* – voices a call for proactive communal responsibility among practitioners of architecture.  
<http://www.labiennale.org/en/architecture/news/31-08b.html>

As many as 35,000 asylum-seekers are expected to arrive in Finland by the end of 2015 (see: <https://www.intermin.fi/fi/maahanmuutto/turvapaikanhakijat>). This has created an acute demand for temporary housing, calling for innovative solutions that can be implemented quickly. It is due to this urgency that this competition is being organized on a faster schedule than normal. Competitors are urged to look at the issue of temporary housing within the wider context of contemporary housing challenges (e.g. homelessness, the housing shortage and high real estate prices in urban areas).

Migration is a theme that is deeply rooted in Finnish history. Over the decades countless Finns have migrated abroad, while Finland has in turn offered a home to many immigrants. Large numbers of Finnish children were evacuated to safety in Sweden during the Second World War. In the 1940s, 400,000 Karelian evacuees were resettled in various parts of the country, many in self-buildable type-planned homes designed by Finland's top architects. Can Finland once again come up with innovative, contemporary solutions that can be implemented quickly, efficiently and sustainably to meet the needs of a mass influx of asylum-seekers?

### ***New challenges call for new solutions***

*How can Finland embrace the opportunities offered by the refugee influx to build a more egalitarian society and greater wellbeing and prosperity for all?*

*Finland needs tangible temporary housing solutions to support asylum-seekers' prospects for long-term quality of life, irrespective of whether they are granted permanent residence in Finland.*



## 2. AIMS AND BACKGROUND OF THE COMPETITION

### 2.1 Aims of the competition

The aim of the competition is to produce tangible proposals for the temporary housing of asylum-seekers awaiting a decision on their refugee status prior to their finding permanent housing in Finland.

The competition offers a good catalyst to ponder the following:

- What, essentially, is an egalitarian society and how can housing solutions contribute to social equality?
- How can this issue be contextualized with the broader framework of challenges faced by Finnish society today?
- How can the refugee crisis be embraced as an opportunity?

The aim of the competition is to produce tangible temporary housing solutions with an eye to also addressing longer-term challenges. Competitors are asked to submit a visually and verbally illustrated proposal for a physical/spatial solution which also addresses social dimensions, combining a comprehensive design strategy with a bold vision. A further goal is to generate wider public debate on the topic of refugee integration.

### 2.2 Background to the brief

#### **Social change**

For some years now Finland has been in the midst of a process of social transition. A demographic shift has occurred: Finland has become a more heterogeneous, multicultural society, the population is ageing rapidly, and urbanization has intensified. These are inescapable trends with various potentially positive outcomes. Meanwhile, however, Finland faces the risk of growing inequality and depletion of its social capital.

The arrival of an unprecedented influx of asylum-seekers in Finland has accelerated these trends, forcing us to come up with new solutions to new challenges. This offers a prime opportunity to design a better tomorrow, combining a systematic design strategy with a bold vision. The solutions should be tangible, yet also visionary. How can contemporary architectural design be harnessed to make Finland a healthier, more vibrant, egalitarian society?



### **Asylum-seekers arriving in our country face many challenges, such as:**

- The crisis of fleeing their homeland due to war and other extreme hardship;
- Extreme losses, e.g. loss of their home and social networks;
- Problems with acculturation and linguistic challenges in Finland.

### **Their arrival also presents many opportunities, such as:**

- Multicultural expertise;
- Fresh perspectives;
- Labour supply.

### **Key issues in the competition**

The first months after asylum-seekers arrive in our country are critical in the acculturation process, laying the foundations for their future integration into Finnish society.

Finland can harness the positive opportunities offered by refugees by building a stronger spirit of communality. But how is this to be achieved? Can a Finn be 'Finnish' by identity yet come from a different country? By expanding the idea of 'we', these two notions need not be mutually exclusive, but could be viewed as naturally forming part of the Finnish identity. How could this expanded concept of identity reshape our cities and their architecture?

If Finland wishes to harness the great opportunities presented by asylum-seekers, a new perspective is needed on a variety of issues. For instance, instead of looking at economic problems through the narrow lens of cost-cutting, they could be viewed as an opportunity to invest in the overall betterment of society.

### **Stepping stone to a new life**

The aim of the competition is to produce temporary housing solutions for refugees awaiting a decision on their refugee status. If their asylum application is approved, Finland could become their new permanent home. In this light, the time they spend in reception centres represents their first contact with their new homeland. Could temporary housing be viewed as part of a process, i.e. a transitional stage or stepping stone to a new stage of life and/or long-term living arrangement? Competitors are requested to take this long-term process into account.

### **Social attitudes**

Many people have strong opinions and aggressive attitudes towards refugee issues. Attitudes towards newcomers are often tainted by the polarization of "us" – the native community – and "them", the outsiders. Ideally, the refugee influx could revise these attitudes. Finland prides itself on being an inherently egalitarian society. Looking at refugees within the context of social equality can help us confront many of the fears that fuel prejudice. Could your proposal help to build bridges between people?

### **Migration as an urban issue**

Globally speaking, migration is invariably an urban issue. Within a narrow perspective, we might imagine that migration could help to revitalize sparsely populated regions of Finland.



Sweden has for instance pursued a policy of keeping the entire country populated, yet even in Sweden the migration issue still principally concerns large cities that offer employment and education opportunities.

We can always learn from history, but today's solutions should address the contemporary challenges of today. Since the Second World War, Finnish society has gone through a major upheaval, with urbanization bringing growing masses to our expanding urban centres. What is the new context in which housing is designed? What is the natural solution for accommodating newcomers, most of whom come from urban environments and are now concentrated in Finland's growing industrial hubs?

### **Systematic design strategy**

What things can we influence with architecture? Do existing architectural paradigms offer enough room to rethink present-day challenges?

The housing challenge cannot be addressed with a single-track approach: a multi-pronged line of attack is needed. There is, for instance, a vast amount of vacant housing and office space going to waste in Finland. How could this space be freed up for the people who need it? What effect could this have on our urban structure and identity?

The competition seeks to find solutions to temporary housing challenges yet with an eye to also addressing long-term issues. Competitors are asked to present a visually and verbally illustrated proposal for a physical/spatial solution which also addresses the social dimension, combining a comprehensive design strategy with a bold vision. Competitors are urged to form multi-disciplinary teams integrating skill-sets from various fields of expertise. A further goal is to generate wider public debate on the topic of refugee integration.



### 3. CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

#### 3.1 Call for submissions

From October 19 to November 30, 2015, the Museum of Finnish Architecture, in collaboration with the Finnish Association of Architects (SAFA), is organizing *From Border to Home – housing solutions for asylum-seekers*, an open architectural competition for the design of temporary housing for asylum-seekers awaiting a decision on their refugee status. The proposals are intended to serve as a temporary solution prior to their finding permanent housing in Finland.

The competition aims to produce tangible solutions for housing asylum-seekers in Nordic society and the cold northern climate. The submissions will form the basis of an exhibition to be staged in the Finnish Pavilion at the forthcoming Venice Architecture Biennale in 2016 curated by the Chilean architect Alejandro Aravena. The biennale's theme, *Reporting from the Front*, voices a call for proactive communal responsibility among practitioners of architecture.

#### 3.2 Competition organizers

The competition is organized by the Museum of Finnish Architecture in collaboration with the Finnish Association of Architects (SAFA).

#### 3.3 Eligibility

*From Border to Home* is an open ideas competition. All professionals are eligible to compete. The organizers urge competitors to form multi-disciplinary teams in which at least one member is licensed to practice architecture in their native country.

**The deadline for registrations is midnight, November 23, 2015. Registration is by email: [competitions@mfa.fi](mailto:competitions@mfa.fi).** Registered competitors will be given a registration code, a password and instructions for the electronic submission of entries. All email addresses will remain anonymous and competitors will be identifiable only by code name. Registrations will be processed confidentially.

#### 3.4 Official competition language

The competition brief will be published in Finnish and English. Some links listed at the end of the brief are available only in either Finnish or English. Submissions are accepted in Finnish, Swedish or English. Competitors have the opportunity to submit inquiries and receive answers in Finnish, Swedish or English. In the event of any interpretational dispute, the content of the original Finnish brief shall apply.



### **3.5 Competition prizes**

There is no cash prize in this competition. A winner and at least three honourable mentions will be selected, although the jury may unanimously decide to proceed differently in accordance with the competition rules issued by the Finnish Association of Architects (SAFA).

### **3.6 Follow-up procedure**

The winner and submissions selected for honourable mentions will be displayed in the Finnish Pavilion at the Venice Architectural Biennale, May 28 – November 27, 2016. The mode of presentation will be decided by the exhibition's curator.

The results of the competition will be reported to Finnish government authorities, including a general description of the competition and submissions, the official report of the jury, analysis of the results, and the jury's comments on the winner and honourable mentions.

The aim of the competition and the publication of its results is to raise awareness among decision-makers of alternative approaches to tackling the refugee housing dilemma.

Insofar as this is feasible, the winning proposal will be implemented after the competition.

### **3.7 The jury**

The organizers have selected the following jurors:

Kadar Gelle, project leader, Finnish Refugee Council  
Mikko Heikkinen, architect, SAFA  
Petri Kaukiainen, Executive Director for Helsinki, Finnish Red Cross  
Marco Steinberg, architect  
Jenni Lautso, architect SAFA  
Samuli Miettinen, architect SAFA  
Sirku Päivärinne, Director of Immigration, Finnish Ministry of the Interior

The professional architects represented on the jury as stipulated by SAFA competition rules are: Mikko Heikkinen, Jenni Lautso, Samuli Miettinen and Marco Steinberg. The jury will be chaired by Marco Steinberg.

The jury may also seek out the opinions of independent experts.

The secretary of the jury is project leader Lena Kingelin from the Museum of Finnish Architecture.

A quorum shall exist when all jurors are present. If a vote is taken, the outcome shall be decided by a simple majority. A quorum remains in place if one juror is detained for



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unavoidable reasons. If the vote is tied, the chairperson's vote is decisive.

### **3.8 Rules of the competition and approval of the brief**

The competition adheres to the competition rules issued by the Finnish Association of Architects (SAFA). This brief has been approved by the organizers, the jury and an expert from the Finnish Association of Architects (SAFA).

### **3.9 Competition dates**

The competition takes place from October 19 to November 11, 2015. The results will be announced on December 14, 2015. The brief and its appendices are distributed free of charge.



## **4 COMPETITION DETAILS**

### **4.1 Documents distributed by the organizer:**

- This brief;
- An appendix containing links to relevant sources. Competitors are requested to familiarize themselves with this material.

The brief and accompanying appendix are available in electronic format via the Museum of Finnish Architecture's website, [www.mfa.fi/rajaltakotiin](http://www.mfa.fi/rajaltakotiin), as of October 19, 2015.

### **4.2 Competition inquiries**

Competitors have the opportunity to request further information on the assignment. Inquiries should be addressed to the jury in Finnish, Swedish or English and emailed to: [competitions@mfa.fi](mailto:competitions@mfa.fi) no later than 4.00 pm on November 16, 2015. A question-and-answer log will be posted on the Museum of Finnish Architecture's website in Finnish, Swedish and English no later than November 23, 2015.

### **4.3 Announcement and display of results**

The jury shall prepare a written report on the submissions. If warranted by a very large number of submissions, the jury may decide to prepare collective summaries of certain groups of submissions. The results will be announced at a ceremony hosted by the Museum of Finnish Architecture between 10.00 am and noon on December 14, 2015. The winner and competitors receiving an honourable mention will be notified in advance. The official competition report will be published on the organizer's website after the ceremony.

### **4.4 Proprietary rights**

Competitors shall retain copyright on their proposal. The organizer has proprietary rights to all competition entries. Both the organizer and the Association of Finnish Architects (SAFA) have publishing rights. The organizers have the right to display the proposals both in publications and exhibitions. The original submissions will not be returned. They will be deposited in the Museum of Finnish Architecture's competition archives.



## 5 THE COMPETITION ASSIGNMENT

### 5.1 General design guidelines

This is not a conventional architectural competition. There is no predefined site or any specific site conditions. The assignment is challenging by virtue of its sheer scale: the focus is not on an individual building or housing block, but on housing solutions within a wider social frame of reference. What is the context within which housing should be designed today?

Competitors are urged to focus on parallel trends, adopting a silo-breaking approach. Population growth is already posing major challenges for Finland today. Youth homelessness is a growing problem. Meanwhile, 12% of Finland's existing office space lies vacant. A vast amount of dining and sanitation facilities are going to waste in unused office buildings, yet legislative barriers are blocking the efficient repurposing of these facilities.

The aim of the competition is to produce tangible temporary housing solutions with an eye to also addressing longer-term challenges. Competitors are asked to present a visually and verbally illustrated proposal for a physical/spatial solution which also addresses social dimensions, combining a comprehensive design strategy with a bold vision. Competitors are urged to form multi-disciplinary teams integrating skill-sets from various fields of expertise. A further goal is to generate wider public debate on the topic of refugee integration.

### 5.2 Adjudication criteria

The competition aims to produce a variety of original, sustainable, tangible and realizable proposals with a significant broad impact on society.

The following will be prioritized in the judging:

- Is the submission socially, culturally and economically **sustainable**?
- Is it **tangible**?
- Is it **realizable**?
- Does it have social **impact**?

The jury will also assign special importance to the overall architectural merit of the proposal as well as its technical and economic feasibility. The winner will be the proposal that best meets the predefined functional criteria, while also being fluently integrated into its context, having broad-ranging social impact and representing high standards of architectural excellence.



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The jury will also address special attention to the following issues:

- How does the proposal address long-term goals?
- Does it build bridges between people?
- How does it address migration as a principally urban issue in contemporary Finland?
- How does the proposed solution promote human encounters and networking?
- How does it advance the future development of Finnish cities and municipalities?



## 6. TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR SUBMISSIONS

Proposals are to be submitted on six horizontal A3-size pages (PDF file). Accompanying explanatory captions are not to exceed one A3-size page printed no smaller than in 10 pt font.

### 6.1 Required documents and entrant anonymity

#### Concept description

Max. 500 words (font minimum 10 pt) printed on an A3-size page. The description should include the following:

- How the concept of 'asylum-seeker' should be understood;
- How asylum-seekers can be viewed as an opportunity;
- A description of the proposed temporary 'housing' solution, both from a physical and social perspective (the two should run in parallel);
- How the proposal supports urban and municipal development;
- How the proposed temporary solution supports long-term quality of life, not only physically and socially, but also economically;
- The larger issues addressed in the proposal and the stand taken by the competitor;
- Any further investigations that should be undertaken in order to proceed with the proposal;
- Any issues not addressed in the proposal but needing attention in follow-up planning.

#### Visual presentation

- Macro-level: Visual presentation of the large-scale solution (time frame 10–30 years), max. 4 x A3;
- Micro-level: Visual presentation of the specific temporary solution (time frame 1–12 months) max. 4 x A3
- Drawings, as applicable depending on the nature of the proposal, e.g. site plan 1:500, section 1:200, floor plans, other relevant sections and elevations including material and colour specifications 1:200. If the proposal consists of a highly detailed solution or a more general concept, other scale drawings may also be submitted within the specified page limit.
- Conceptual illustration
- Other material may be submitted within the specified page limit, all in a single file (max. 50 megabytes). The file name must include the entrant's identification code.
- A separate code identification file is to be submitted together with the proposal (e.g. identificationcode.docx)

The submission procedure is anonymous. Each individual page must include the entrant's identification code. In addition to the proposal, competitors must also submit an



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identification code file specifying the following details: identification code, architect(s), (and assistants), name, address, email and phone number of point-of-contact as well as copyright holder. This file will not be opened unless the proposal wins or receives an honourable mention. No identification marks revealing the identity of the competitor are to appear in the submitted proposals.

## **6.2 Submission of entries**

Competition entries are to be submitted electronically to the Museum of Finnish Architecture by midnight, Monday, November 30, 2015: <http://mfa.fi>