

The Silta facility - Finland

Introduction

Silta-Valmennusyhdistys ry manages the Silta facility, a community-based transition house located in Tampere, Finland. The facility provides group-based housing and structured support for people serving the final phase of a prison sentence or living in supervised probationary freedom. In addition to residential support, the Silta facility carries out outreach work in the Tampere area, focusing particularly on individuals with substance abuse problems and criminal backgrounds.



The Silta facility operates under a formal contract with the Finnish prison system. This contract defines the framework of its activities, including housing, food provision, daily routines, rules and regulations, and procedures for special situations. The overall aim of the Silta facility's work is to support desistance from crime, promote a substance-free lifestyle, and strengthen residents' everyday life skills and social integration as they transition from imprisonment to community life.

Silta-Valmennusyhdistys was founded in 2001. Its establishment is closely connected to structural changes within the Finnish Prison and Probation Association. When the association was transformed into a governmental institution, part of its former premises in Tampere were preserved for community-based transition work. The Silta facility was founded to continue this work in the same location.

Scale

The Silta facility has accommodation for a maximum of ten residents at a time. The facility is not divided into separate living groups.

RESCALED-principles in practice:

- Small-scale
- Differentiation
- Community-integration

Differentiation

Target group:

The Silta facility is intended for adults with a criminal and substance abuse background. The facility is mixed-gender, although the majority of residents are men. Placement is based primarily on the individual's own motivation for change and their willingness and ability to reflect on and discuss personal issues in a

group-based setting. A lack of motivation or a desistance process that is considered to be at a very early stage may function as a contraindication for placement.

Admission to the Silta facility typically takes place during the final phase of a prison sentence. During imprisonment, either a prison officer or a Silta employee may introduce the possibility of placement. This is followed by preparatory discussions involving the prison, the incarcerated person, and Silta, as well as an interview conducted by The Silta facility staff. Placement can occur only if all parties agree. Due to waiting lists, this process usually takes approximately three to six months. The average length of stay at the transition house is around three to four months.

Forms of security:

Security at the Silta facility is primarily based on relational security. Trust, responsibility, solidarity, and shared rules form the foundation of safety within the community. Residents are expected to commit to the community's rules and values, and breaches are discussed collectively in community meetings. When necessary, staff members intervene in problematic situations if the residents are unable to resolve them independently.

Staff provide comprehensive support for residents in areas such as desistance from crime, maintaining a substance-free lifestyle, managing everyday life, and handling matters with authorities and service providers. Guidance is also offered in relation to education and entering working life.



In terms of static security, living quarters are regularly checked by both staff members and residents who are assigned responsibility roles. Residents also ensure that common area doors are closed and report any issues to staff. In addition, an external company provides camera surveillance of the premises. Residents are electronically monitored by the prison authorities. Electronic monitoring includes a weekly schedule and designated areas where residents are permitted to move. If a client fails to follow the schedule, prison officers contact them to clarify the situation.

Procedural security plays an important role in daily life at Silta-Valmennusyhdistys. Rule violations are addressed collectively in community discussions. Residents are tested for drug use on a weekly basis. Repeated breaches of rules or the use of alcohol or drugs result in the resident being returned to a closed prison. The rules cover residents' rights and responsibilities, attitudes toward change-oriented work,

behavior within the community, participation in community meetings, management of personal matters, attendance at AA/NA meetings, free-time activities, substance use and testing procedures, guests and leaves, and movement within and outside the Silta area

Activities:

Daily life at the Silta facility is designed to support residents' independence and social integration. Residents practice skills needed for independent living while following a structured schedule. The weekly programme is discussed within the community, and residents are encouraged to participate in planning activities. Residents make appointments independently, but they are required to inform staff about their plans. The working approach is based on psychosocial community-based support combined with AA/NA-oriented tasks. Daily routines include community meetings, AA/NA meetings, and tasks that support the functioning of the community.

Activities available within the facility include two gyms, art activities, sports, cooking together in the evenings, watching television, playing board games, participating in therapeutic groups and study groups, and having individual discussions with staff. Activities outside the facility include attending AA/NA groups and visiting the city, for example for grocery shopping or other errands.

Residents receive guidance related to education and employment. They can participate in groups addressing traumatic experiences, learn cooking skills, take part in lived-experience training, and attend activities supporting desistance from crime. Programs aimed at reducing violent behavior are also available, although some of these are organized by other NGOs.

The Silta facility provides lunch for residents, while other meals are prepared independently. Residents are responsible for their own grocery shopping. Contact with social networks is supported through phone calls, email, internet use, and visits. First-time visitors must verify their identity, and the prison authorities are informed when residents receive visitors.

Community-integration

Location and architecture:

The Silta facility is located approximately 5.4 kilometers from the center of Tampere. The premises were originally owned by the Prison and Probation Association and were transferred to Silta in 2001. The association had operated a service and activity center in the same premises since 1990, meaning that the

surrounding neighborhood was already accustomed to this type of facility. As a result, there has been no notable NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) opposition.

The surrounding area consists of industrial buildings as well as private single-family homes. The facility is accessible by public transportation. There are no fences around the premises, which allows people to walk into the area. However, if unauthorized individuals are noticed, they are guided away by staff.

The facility includes offices for staff members, shared spaces for community-based support, dining and leisure activities, and three small residential houses where the residents are accommodated. The premises are somewhat old but cosy and homelike.

Residents have their own bedrooms, bathrooms, toilets, and kitchens. Some also have access to shared living rooms. Outdoor spaces are shared, while other rooms are private. The premises include a small volleyball field, trees, and a vegetable garden used during the summer.

Interaction with the community:

Residents at the Silta facility are able to leave the premises and engage with the surrounding community, fostering both social integration and practical life skills. The organization maintains extensive cooperation with various NGOs serving similar client groups, as well as with schools, recruitment agencies, and employers. One of its most significant partners is the Prison and Probation Service, reflecting the organization's role in supporting individuals under supervision.

The facility also collaborates closely with social and welfare regions, particularly in arranging housing solutions for residents after their stay. The Community Sanctions Office is another key partner, enabling individuals to complete community sanctions at the Silta facility. Employment authorities contribute to supporting residents' integration into the workforce and society at large.

In addition to these formal partnerships, the facility has engaged in community-oriented activities. A lunch restaurant previously operated on-site and was open to the general public, providing residents with practical work experience. Small-scale collaborations with local businesses have offered additional work training opportunities. The organization has also supported the neighborhood through occasional activities such as lawn mowing and tree trimming.

The Silta facility

Founded: 2001

Capacity: 10

Autonomy level: High level of autonomy

Nearest city: Tampere (Finland)

Nature of interaction:

Mapped by Silta (19/11/2025)

The surrounding area provides further opportunities for community engagement, with several nearby companies and stores, as well as a church within walking distance.

Publicity/ read more

- About Silta-Valmennusyhdistys ry at the official website of Silta-Valmennusyhdistys ry:

Silta-Valmennusyhdistys ry. (n.d.). *Official website*. Retrieved December 29, 2025, from <https://www.siltavalmennus.fi/>