

## "Proefwonen" – fast access to affordable homes

Belgium (Flanders) - Woonwinkel Zennevallei

### SUMMARY OF PROJECT

Through "Proefwonen", housing and social service providers collaborate to facilitate rental access for people with intellectual disabilities and/or mental health problems. Rather than having to register for housing on the regular social-service waiting list, Proefwonen allows these clients to apply for faster access to an affordable home. A steering group matches available housing with the candidate-tenants through a consensus process. The project has also resulted in a number of adaptations to the legal framework in Flanders, lifting legal barriers for intersectional collaboration.

"Inclusion of persons with intellectual disability and/or mental health needs in social rented housing, can only be accomplished by adopting a multilateral consultation model between care and housing providers. To match a certain individual with a certain house requires careful consideration."

### We need the name and title of individual

### FACTS & FIGURES

- 24 candidate-tenants have entered the program over a period of three years. More than 5 percent of the approximate 450 total local allocated homes were reserved for persons with intellectual and/or mental health issues over the same period.
- 11 program participants have been interviewed about their experiences and each one has evaluated their new living environment positively.
- All participants were and are still able to live independently. Four were able to suspend support services, either after a move to a different residence or after a positive evaluation. Most still receive support, but for clients whose prospects are good the level of support will be reduced.

### PROBLEMS TARGETED

Proefwonen aims to address several difficulties that hinder successful cooperation between welfare and social rental services:

- the unpredictable timing associated with the waiting lists of social housing services can hinder the smooth transition of a person with intellectual and/or psychological problems from an institutional setting to an independent life with support;

- there are few options to 'try out' independent living and to take a step back, if necessary – two conditions for de-institutionalization;
- housing providers are faced with vulnerable clients, but do not have the means to support them. In some cases, this may lead to eviction.

## SOLUTION & METHODOLOGY

The social housing provider informs the welfare partners when a house is available for the project, sharing information on the characteristics of the home and the living environment. After a process of exploring the housing and support needs of a client, a care provider can register the client for the project. The matching process is performed in consensus by a local, intersectorial steering committee. Accepting support is a condition of participation in this program. One of the key features of the project is the possibility it offers to people with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities/learning difficulties and/or mental health problems to move from residential care to independent living

## OUTLOOK & TRANSFERABILITY

Following a positive evaluation of the project in the city of Halle, the regional Flemish government is developing a legal framework for its structural implementation. This legal framework also encourages other cities throughout Flanders to take similar initiatives. Because the homes available for the project were part of the existing housing capacity of the social housing providers, project costs were limited to additional administrative time (internal staff costs) and facilitation of the experimental procedures (paid for by a grant by the Flemish government).

Photo: Yes

## CONTACT

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