



## **Integrated Action Plan (IAP) developed by the local group of the URBACT Roof project (ULG) to combat homelessness in Liege**

The City of Liège has engaged in the URBACT roof project to design, implement and evaluate an integrated action plan that aims to eradicate homelessness by improving data quality and by shifting the paradigm towards the Housing first/housing led approach.

The objective of this paper is to define the structure of the future integrated action plan. It will identify concrete actions and those responsible for their design and implementation. It will be submitted for approval to the Municipal Council.

The document has been drawn up on the basis of the URBACT Guidelines for co-producing an integrated action plan (may 2020).

The result is the **design of a housing pathway for the homeless people**. It is structured around new mechanisms : the one-stop shop, funding for new support professions, the creation of an observatory, the housing taskforce and new ways of accessing housing.

**This is made possible by new funding from the federal government and Wallonia.**

### **Part 1 Presentation of the context and the process (5 pages)**

#### **a) Describe the context of the city and the initial definition of the policy problem or challenge**

The City of Liege is a city of 200,000 inhabitants located in an urban agglomeration of 630,000 inhabitants. It is the economic capital of Wallonia, the fourth largest commercial centre in Belgium, a student city (100,000) and a city marked by poverty and migration.

Liège is a post-industrial city which is in a process of transition: several areas have been the subject of urban renewal operations which have enabled the creation of new infrastructures and equipment which are redesigning the city. The installation of the tram is the most structuring operation.

25% of the population lives below the poverty line. Day and night shelters for the homeless have been saturated for over a decade. The supply of accessible housing for people in precarious situations remains insufficient.

The City of Liège has a long experience in the field of homelessness. Until the 2000s, the approach was mainly emergency oriented: low threshold reception, street work and accommodation. The staircase model is still predominant in Liege.

Since 2012, a Housing first project has been set up. It is planned to extend it. In September 2018, the first supervised drug consumption room in Belgium was opened in Liège. This tool is to be integrated into the strategy to fight homelessness.

Despite this, the concentration of drug users and homeless people in the city centre creates tensions in the public space. The count in October 2020, carried out during a particular period of curfew imposed for by the health measures to curb the COVID pandemic, listed 200 people living on the streets or in tents and camps.

The City of Liège, its CPAS and the partners of the local network of public and private homelessness organisations (RSPL) have decided in 2019 to change the policy by improving the data and generalising the Housing first/housing led approach. This decision is already reflected in the RSPL's 2020-2025 action plans and in the Social Cohesion Plan of the city of Liege.

The **challenges** we face are still numerous:

- to **enlarge the network of actors involved in the support of the homeless**: until now it is mainly the operators of the homeless sector who have been involved in the ULG. The challenge is to involve actors from housing, health, mental health, addiction, youth work and legal aid.
- to ensure the **appropriation of the "housing first/housing led approach"** by all the partners of the local network by informing institutions, training frontline workers and communicating interactively with a collaborative digital platform;
- to **increase the supply of housing** for the homeless through new partnerships with the public housing sector, social housing agencies (SHAs), the "Becoming a Solidarity Owner" project, the RSPL housing sensor and public-private partnerships.
- **Designing a homelessness prevention policy.**

With the decision of the Municipal College of 7 February 2020, the City of Liège confirms its commitment to be a partner in the URBACT ROOF project. The specific challenge we want to take up as a partner in this action plan network is to end homelessness through innovative housing solutions at city level.

The project will focus on moving from managing homelessness to actually ending it through Housing First/Led and collecting accurate data. We are convinced that by working through this URBACT Roof network we will be able to better address these challenges.

#### **b) Focus : resistance to change**

To make the paradigm shift, it is necessary to convince the local community that the Housing First approach is the solution to ending homelessness. We need to tell the story that will involve all political groups, citizens, landlords, traders, health services, police, justice, social services, that together we can meet this challenge!

For this reason, a great deal of information and awareness-raising work is being carried out with the political authorities, the operators in the field and the population.

Misunderstandings and fears have been overcome among the actors in the field through dialogue during the training, interventions and consultations organised in the framework of the URBACT ROOF project.

Despite these efforts, various sectors such as housing, justice and mental health are still insufficiently involved in this process of paradigm shift towards Housing First/Housing led.

The organisation of a forum on homelessness after the URBACT Roof project would help to mobilise the whole community on the issue and would allow the integrated strategic plan to be validated and disseminated.

### c) Description of the process

All the active forces working on these issues must be brought together. While the “Relais Social du Pays de Liège” coordinates public and private measures on a decree basis at the level of the agglomeration, the integrated action plan developed within the framework of the URBACT Roof project is an opportunity to define operational objectives and more specific processes in the municipality of Liège and to design a better involvement of the other municipalities of the agglomeration in the future.

An effective strategy to eradicate homelessness must necessarily be inclusive, with homeless people themselves as well as with all stakeholders. The steering of such a project must be clear, but it must also be shared. It is therefore necessary for the city to take a clear position on its willingness to work with all stakeholders, in particular the voluntary sector.

The **local Urbact group (ULG)** is responsible for drawing up an integrated action plan. The international exchanges with the 9 other cities between 2020 and 2022 should feed the reflection at local level.

In 2020, the meetings were mainly devoted to the organisation and evaluation of the count. In 2021, the work focused on support, communication and innovative housing solutions.

The participation of Ghent and Liège led the King Baudouin Foundation to finance the support of these two cities to carry out a first homeless count in October 2020.

This experience has enabled a new remobilisation of the local network around this issue and has made it possible to produce quality data on the number and different profiles of homeless people in Liège.

A rich exchange took place during one year on the production of data between the Belgian researchers, the cities of the roof network and the local operators. All of this has led to a change of perspective on the data and the *integration of new concepts: Ethos light, hidden homelessness, pathway monitoring, referents, etc.*

Despite the difficult context of the pandemic and the implementation of new emergency plans, the team of the City, the CPAS and the RSPL was able to set up a three-day Housing first training session for 12 workers of the local network, which facilitated the appropriation of the 8 cardinal principles of Housing first, such as "*recovery*", the separation between housing and support, etc.

Successive crises have forced innovation. Following the creation of a homeless campsite in March 2020, the question of rehousing arose: the Housing Task Force was born. The name was perhaps ill-chosen because it became above all a place of case management from May to October 2020. During the winter period 2020-2021, all the energy was mobilised for the organisation of a shared day care centre and the management of new accommodation spaces.

The intervention of social workers providing social support in housing within the framework of the “Devenir propriétaire Solidaire” project has highlighted questions about the coordination of the various schemes in Liège. A need for better communication and inter-knowledge was felt. Hence the

idea of organising an intersectoral seminar on 4 October 2021 where frontline workers from the mental health, social action and housing sectors met to get to know each other better and exchange their practices.

The Small Size Actions allow for reflection on communication and awareness-raising around homelessness. A partnership with the Master in Social Design at Saint-Luc has made it possible to produce a new communication tool. The students conducted interviews with homeless people and organise a communication action to raise awareness of their situation among the local population.

The creation of a Housing/Accommodation Working Group in 2021 has enabled the identification of the most plausible courses of action to improve supply at local level.

The transnational exchanges were marked by the pandemic. Field visits were replaced by webinars. This did not prevent the partners from having rich exchanges and co-constructing solutions through MIRO. In addition to the meetings between partners, participation in Urbact Roof has enabled the participation in numerous webinars organised by Urbact, UIA, FEANTSA, Euroscities or the European institutions. A highlight was undoubtedly the online Winterschool in Braga in March 2021 in which, during three days, members of local groups had the opportunity to enrich their knowledge and skills.

Participation in the Belgian Homelessness Research has enabled us to understand the diversity of homeless profiles (migrants, homeless youth, drug addicts, women victims of violence,...). The causes of homelessness and the solutions are specific<sup>1</sup>.

The article, Social inclusion of people with multiple diagnoses - Housing first as a system and not as a project, written by Gregor Stangherlin and Arnaud Jacquinet, for the Prevention and local security handbook, published in October 2021 by Politeia, takes up some of the ideas that the URBACT Roof project has helped to germinate in the Liège area.

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<sup>1</sup> In the BRAIN-project TRAHOME, three research groups have joined forces: LUCAS KU Leuven, Social Work and Social Pedagogy UGent and CIRTES of the UCL. TRAHOME is a four-year research project on the trajectories of homeless persons based on a mixed methods research approach.

## **Part 2 Action Plan**

### **a) Objectives, actions and timetable**

The integrated action plan is structured around 5 objectives:

- 1) build an integrated strategy to eradicate chronic homelessness based on the Housing first/Housing led model
- 2) define a specific prevention policy with regard to groups at risk
- 3) improve the quality of data
- 4) strengthen social support in housing
- 5) find innovative housing solutions.

For each objective, specific priority actions are proposed. These are existing actions that would be strengthened or new actions to be implemented. Indicators will be defined to ensure continuous monitoring of the integrated action plan.

Action Table					
Specific objective					
<b>Strengthening the integrated Housing first approach</b>					
Action	Intended Result	Resources	Lead agency	Key partners	Timescale
Convention and IAP	Commitment of stakeholders	human, finance	RSPL	CPAS, City of Liège, Walloon Region and Federal Government, RWLP, 107	2022 june
FORUM	Involve citizens, homeless people, associations, inhabitants, owners		City of Liège	RSPL, CPAS	2023
Internal communication	Better understanding of the tools and actions	Housing Task force/Case management, project steering committee	RSPL	City of Liège, CPAS, members of RSPL	2021
External communication	Better information of actions and better following of homeless people	Website, facebook, flyers, videos	RSPL, Urbact roof SSA	City of Liège	May 2022

<b>Design un general and specific prevention strategy</b>					
Action	Intended Result	Resources	Lead agency	Key partners	Timescale
General prevention	avoid eviction	housing and social services	CPAS	City of Liège	2023
Youth	prevent youth homelessness	Working group young homeless people	Youth prevention service	AMO, City of Liège	2021
LGTB	prevent discrimination	Convention Youth hostel and apartments	<a href="http://www.fondation-ihsane-jarfi.be/">http://www.fondation-ihsane-jarfi.be/</a>		2020
Women	Protection of women victims of violence	Walloon region	Collective against women and exclusion	City of Liège, RSPL	2021
Discrimination campaign	raise awareness among owners	Walloon region	City of Liège	UNIA, CRIPEL, Walloon region	2022

<b>Improve data quality</b>					
Action	Intended Result	Resources	Lead agency	Key partners	Timescale
One-point counting	organization OPC with more partners on the agglomeration and involvement health and youth sector	Walloon Government and City of Liège	City of Liège - Prévention	RSPL	2023
path way monitoring	monitoring housing inclusion pathways by creation of a one-stop-shop	RSPL	RSPL	CPAS, Shelter	2023
Data collection of service provider	Integrate ethos light and one-point counting data		Walloon observatory of homelessness IWEPS	partners of RSPL	2023

<b>Strengthening support</b>					
Action	Intended Result	Resources	Lead agency	Key partners	Timescale
Housing task force	case management	Walloon region, City	RSPL	CPAS, Projet Tremplin, CASS,	2020
Training program and workshops	develop capabilities of first front workers, create a common vision of support by different sector	SSA Urbact roof	City of Liège, RSPL	RSPL, Habitat-Service, RAPEL	2020
Solidar Owner and Housing led projects	involve more partners	City of Liège, Walloon region, European Social Fund, Health	Habitat-Service	RSPL, APL, Caritas, CRIPEL,	2020

<b>Improving access to affordable housing</b>					
Action	Intended Result	Resources	Lead agency	Key partners	Timescale
Public housing	convention with social housing companies	SPW, ML, Logis social, Ville de Liège	SWL, Regional Government,	City of Liège, Maison Liégeoise, Logis social	2022
Social Rental Agencies	convention	Walloon region	City of Liège, Liège Logement	RSPL	2022
Solidary Owner et housing catcher	increase the number of solidary owners	PCS City of Liège	City of Liège, Habitat-Service	RSPL, Caritas international, Thais, CPAS-Relais logement	2020
Renovation of the shelter	double number of place, diversity of housing solutions and continuum of support	Integrated City Policy - Walloon region	CPAS	ASBL Abri de nuit	2024
Cooperative Housing	Buy and renovate apartments/houses for homeless	Wallon region	Les Tournières	Support teams forom RSPL partners	2022

Light habitat areas		City of Liège	Collectif sortir du bois		2022



## **1) Building an integrated strategy to eradicate chronic homelessness based on the Housing first/Housing led model**

Leaders: City of Liège, RSPL, CPAS Liège, Walloon and Federal Government

An integrated approach to urban development means that :

- cooperation between neighbouring municipalities (territorial integration) ;
- cooperation between all levels of government (vertical integration)
- inter-sectoral cooperation (horizontal integration);
- the balance between physical and social investments (resource integration) is ensured.

The integrated approach to homelessness policy is partially achieved. At the vertical level, social welfare, housing, justice (prisons) and health policies are insufficiently coordinated to tackle homelessness effectively.

Homelessness is a shared competence between the federal state, the regions and the local authorities. The tasks of the different levels of government have changed significantly over the last three decades. Successive reforms of the state have given the regions increasingly important competences, reducing the role of the federal state in functional and sectoral policies.

The definition of sectoral policies generates multiple perverse effects. For this reason, cross-sectoral measures are flourishing which are supposed to provide a response to sectoral and intersectoral compartmentalisation. The municipalities are invited to play a coordinating and concerted role, via the social cohesion, prevention and security plan or via the urban development programmes. This mission is not easy. It finds itself in competition with regional mechanisms that are active on a supra-local scale (social relay, regional integration centre for foreigners or people of foreign origin in Liège, basin authority, psychiatric platform, prevention council of the Aide à la Jeunesse, etc.). The multiplication of public interest organisations (OIP) makes management even more complex.

Therefore, it seems necessary to think about the articulation between policies in a perspective of cooperation, by defining common or at least complementary objectives.

The Centre Public d'Action Sociale occupies a very special place in this institutional landscape. Depending on the political sensitivities of the majority in power, its missions are expanded or limited. The answer to the initial question must therefore be nuanced. The mission of the commune is strongly dependent on the local context (resources and mechanisms).

The focus of inclusion policies on training and employment over the last two decades was a consequence of the ideology of the "active welfare state". This policy had great difficulty in thinking about social inclusion in an integrated way. The pandemic is a reminder of how necessary access to health and housing are to prevent social exclusion.

Housing as a tool to combat homelessness is relatively recent and is part of a new strategy: a paradigm shift from emergency to inclusion. Social support services for housing were developed at the beginning of the 2000s (post-housing reception centres, rental assistance from the Fonds du Logement, Housing Promotion Associations, etc.).

The 2014 cooperation agreement between the federal state, communities and regions defines the role and responsibility of each level of government in the fight against homelessness. It provides a

framework for cooperation between the different levels of government. Municipalities can take the initiative to facilitate inter-institutional cooperation in specific projects.

An integrated, multi-actor and multi-sectoral approach to homelessness is needed and institutional silos must be overcome. The development of an integrated national plan has enabled several countries to act effectively on homelessness, but prioritisation according to the local context is still necessary.

### **Organise a FORUM on homelessness in Liège in September 2023**

FEANTSA has produced a guide to developing an integrated homelessness strategy that could inspire local authorities. We propose a methodology that relies on collective intelligence: the organisation of a FORUM would be the starting point. Without a precise diagnosis at the outset with specific indicators, it will be difficult to evaluate the strategy. We need to move away from managing homelessness by finding innovative answers to very concrete questions: how to ensure low-threshold reception of the homeless? How to ensure continuity of care and social support? What type of accommodation and housing should be provided? How can we ensure the financing of these services? What policies can be put in place at the level of the conurbation in partnership with the municipalities, the CPAS, the RSPL and the Province of Liege? Shouldn't we provide specific responses for different groups (women, migrants, drug addicts, etc.)? Isn't there a problem of insufficient emergency accommodation in Liège and Charleroi? Why are the majority of resources devoted to social emergencies and not to the prevention of homelessness or to housing policy?

Instead of opposing the different approaches, it is interesting to focus on their complementarity. It is important to create places where the historical sector (shelters, night and day shelters, housing promotion associations...) can meet the new wave (Housing first/Housing Led) so that there is a positive contamination between sectors. Liège has a diversified network, but the evaluations of the actions over the last ten years carried out by the RSPL and the PCS make it possible to identify certain levers for action and to formulate a series of hypotheses on the priority actions to be developed.

## **2) Define a general and specific prevention policy with regard to the target groups**

Leadpartner: City of Liège, CPAS Liège, Prevention Plan Youth Aid, 107

### **General prevention**

A truly preventive approach must work towards a better understanding of the complex mechanisms and structural causes of the production and reproduction of homelessness, including the limits of existing systems and practices; it must therefore go beyond a historical "curative" approach and be integrated into a more inclusive policy (with regard to begging, occupation of public space, etc.) and which fights against all forms of criminalisation, conditionalisation of access to rights, generalisation of "low threshold" logics to facilitate access, etc. This necessary approach must also be accompanied by a critical inventory of the structural limits and perverse or even counter-productive effects of all the systems and their intertwining, with a view to transforming and improving them for the priority benefit of users.

A number of actions do not depend on the municipal level. Nevertheless, cities have an important role to play in the regions and can bring about change by activating their networks. In this sense, cities can support regional or federal dynamics to

1. Establish a regional, universal, mandatory and public rental guarantee fund;

2. Implement rent control policies and a real rent allowance
3. Achieve renovated and refinanced public housing, including a halt to the sale of public housing and the draining of public money to private funds;
4. Redeploy financial means from private housing (housing vouchers, etc.) to public housing: SLSP (Société de Logement de Service Public), AIS (Agence Immobilière Sociale), APL (Association de Promotion du Logement), CLT (Capteur Logement), etc., review the tax system and tax real estate income (rents);
5. Avoiding evictions. Currently, once the situation between landlord and tenant has gone wrong, the justice system has few means to avoid them. Shouldn't mediation be strengthened?
6. Individualise rights and stop penalising cohabitation;
7. Give more resources to hospitals and prisons to prepare for release from institutions;
8. Take strong measures to combat unhealthy housing, to fight against slum landlords by putting the inhabitants at the heart of the system and by effectively guarding against counter-productive effects (administrative evictions, loss of housing, deterioration of living conditions, etc.).

Other means of action, on the other hand, are communal and require a redeployment of human and financial resources or the improvement of existing measures and their implementation.

1. To put an end to unoccupied housing and to fight against insalubrity (with and in the direct interest of the inhabitants), the municipality could strengthen the Social Housing Agency in particular, so that it becomes active in the soft requisition. This requires the reactivation and the setting up of a list of unoccupied housing and to communicate around it to reinforce the work of support and incitement of the owners, via the police, the town planning, the public safety and health service (SSSP), the taxation, ..., so that they renovate their property to put it back on the market (or failing that to sell it). In addition, the injunction system should be implemented in Liège to force recalcitrant tenants to end their vacancy by legal means. This policy also calls for horizontal partnership work with all operators likely to play a role in the fight against vacancy.
2. The city can support the establishment of social housing cooperatives and housing sensors. In particular, the sale of public housing should be stopped, but also the introduction of urban planning charges in all building projects for the increased creation of public housing.
3. Creation of a prevention unit for extreme precariousness (home visits to people who encounter problems in order to organise mediation with a landlord, a payment plan for rent arrears or to help the tenant carry out minor comfort work, help for the elderly, etc.).
4. In its meeting of 1 March 2021, the municipal council of the City of Liege approved a motion on the problem of discrimination in housing on the private rental market. Objective: to set up a policy at municipal level to combat discrimination in the private rental market. Expected result: to draw up a proposal to be submitted to the Municipal Council.

## Specific prevention

The Youth Aid Prevention Service's "young people on the move" working group

This is a new public youth welfare service that has been created following the reform of the AJ in 2018. Prevention has been rethought and reaffirmed. New schemes have been introduced.

The main mission of the service is to support and develop prevention policies in its borough and to act on the environment of vulnerable young people aged 0 to 22. Why 22? It was a political compromise made during the negotiations on the reform. It is therefore fairly recent that this public is included in the scope of the AJ.

The prevention service establishes a social diagnosis from which a three-year prevention action plan is derived. The prevention department ensures that this plan is properly implemented.

It is headed by the Prevention Officer. There is one for each division or judicial district.

The 2020 social diagnosis, carried out by the prevention service, taking into account the findings of various sectors, highlights an increase in the precariousness of the public and social inequalities. It also highlights the difficulties associated with the transition from minority to majority, a particularly sensitive and decisive period for the future of young people. For those with a background in youth work, access to adult services is not without difficulty.

Fieldworkers encounter more young people who have been made vulnerable by the transition to adulthood, who are experiencing many difficulties and who have broken away from the mainstream.

These young people do not always find support that corresponds to their needs, which can lead them to a "life of making do".

Numerous sources confirm these observations, in particular the count of the City of Liège but also the data relating to the Social Relay.

The stakes are therefore very high:

- To fight against and prevent homelessness among young people.
- To create intersectoral dynamics to accompany and support young people who are wandering.
- To create flexible systems that meet the needs of homeless young people in order to fill the institutional "gaps".
- Lobby the various authorities with a view to promoting cross-sectoral funding.

A working group was initiated by the prevention service. It targets wandering young people aged 18 to 25, who have broken away from their families and are socially disaffected.

It currently brings together several partners from different sectors with the aim of strengthening intersectoral synergies in the Liège division: the Liège prevention service, the Liège PCS, the Relais social du pays de Liège, the City of Liège, the AMO CIAJ, the AMO Droit des jeunes, the AMO la Débrouille, the AMO Reliance, the MAdo de Liège, the PCS of Seraing, Mobilea, a liaison officer from REALISM, the City of Seraing, the CPAS of Seraing, ReLiA, the PCS of Engis, Habitat Service (APL), AMO le CLAJ, AMO Reliance, Racynes, the CPAS Herstal, Intermède...

The objective of this group is to create concrete and adapted answers to the needs of young wanderers (housing, support, place to rest...).

The working group initially focused on collecting quantitative and qualitative data, analysing needs, meeting existing initiatives in other territories and pooling resources. This work confirmed our findings explained before.

One of the objectives for this year is to increase the Housing First trajectories for young people.

We are currently reflecting on the creation of the most appropriate response(s).

Other actions are to be developed.

### Women victims of violence

Since the beginning of 2021, the City of Liège, the resource centre specialising in domestic and family violence and the Province have set themselves the objective of creating an interdisciplinary Liège support and protection system for victims in critical situations of domestic violence. In concrete terms, the health, police, social and justice sectors, which are mainly concerned by the problem, are meeting to build this system, taking into account the framework and realities of each. The idea is to create an interdisciplinary consultation unit specialising in domestic violence, made up of representatives of the above-mentioned sectors, whose role is to draw up a concerted and coordinated action plan to protect and support victims. The mechanism should be in place by the second half of 2022.

### **3) Improving data quality**

Leaders: City of Liège, RSPL, IWEPS, ULiège, CPAS Liège, FRB, Universities

Why is the question of data a central issue in the fight against homelessness? Volker Busch-Geertsema, coordinator of FEANTSA's European Observatory on Homelessness, reminded a recent conference of the importance of data as an indicator of social exclusion.

This data (count, sociological, medical, family profile, etc.) allows us to

- Measure the extent of housing needs
- Identify the groups most affected;
- Measure trends over time;
- Develop policies to reduce or prevent homelessness;
- Measuring the effectiveness of the policy;
- Identify unintended effects.

Data can be a powerful tool to influence policy and practice. It is often easier to collect and measure data at local level than at regional or national level. Trend data can be useful, even if it is not perfect. Different methods and different types of data can lead to radically different conclusions. Data alone does not change anything. Transferring them into policy is necessary. It is important to set realistic targets and measure progress. Political will is always essential.

Article 3 of the cooperation agreement of 12 May 2014 on homelessness between the federal state and the communities and regions states: "The following definitions apply: Homelessness and homelessness: a situation in which a person does not have his or her own home, is unable to obtain it by his or her own means and therefore has no place of residence, or is temporarily residing in a hostel while waiting for housing to be made available. The signatory parties recognise the European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS) as a conceptual framework definition of homelessness and houselessness. This framework definition constitutes an instrument for identifying categories of homelessness and houselessness.

The relevance of ethos-light typology has been highlighted in various scientific researches such as "Measuring homelessness in Belgium" (MEHOBEL). This study recommends a combination of 6 measurement methods:

1. Organisation of a national enumeration
2. Annual statistics on reference addresses
3. Integration of ETHOS Light into service registration systems
4. Annual statistics on the number of evictions
5. EU SILC: statistics on affordability and quality of housing
6. Annual statistics on waiting lists for social housing.

The count of homeless people carried out in 2020 with the help of the King Baudouin Foundation provides interesting data for an updated diagnosis. One-point counting is the methodology chosen to assess the number and profile of the different categories of homeless and inadequately housed people. This questionnaire survey carried out with workers who accompany homeless people incorporates the Ethos light typology, which distinguishes 6 operational categories/life situations: rough sleepers (1), people in emergency accommodation (2), people in hostels for the homeless (3), people living in institutions (4), people living in non-conventional accommodation due to lack of housing (5) and homeless people temporarily accommodated with friends or family due to lack of housing (6). The count involves all stakeholders who may be in contact with different categories of homeless people (PCSWs, primary care physicians, mutual insurance companies, youth welfare services, hospitals, neighbourhood associations, citizens' groups, etc.). This multi-service involvement is one of the keys to success because it allows new audiences to be reached by highlighting hidden homelessness (women, children, illegal residents). The reports of the count organised with the King Baudouin Foundation thus show the need for a multi-sectoral approach involving all levels of government. The issues of social action, health, housing, access to the territory, youth support, and security and justice are interdependent and require concerted, cross-sectoral action.

### **Organise a one-point- counting of the homeless by questionnaire every two years**

The King Baudouin Foundation financed the KULeuven and ULiège to draw up a methodological guide and to support the municipalities in carrying out a homeless census at the end of October 2020. The objective was to produce data for the whole of Belgium with the same methodology in line with the MEHOBEL study. This project has enabled the questionnaire methodology to be tested and detailed profiles of the homeless in Liege to be established. However, there is still work to be done to optimise the use of the tool:

- Involve hospital, prison and youth welfare institutions in future counts. The involvement of these types of institutions is particularly interesting from a preventive perspective;
- To set up a working group to reflect on improving the data for categories (5) and (6): squatting, light housing, eviction. The aim of this working group is to provide better data on 'hidden' homelessness in Liege. The first step will be to make an inventory of "inadequate housing" (category 5 of Ethos light): to identify people living in "pirate houses", squats, camping, unhealthy housing and threatened with eviction. A second step will be to analyse the phenomenon: where does it come from? Can it provide a solution? Under what conditions? Composition: City of Liège, Police, CPAS, SPW, Justice of the Peace, RSPL and representatives of the public concerned. See the minutes of the Urbact Roof WG meeting of 12 December concerning Ethos light.
- Facilitate the appropriation of the tool by the PCSW services (Social Emergency and Homeless Antenna).

### **Ensure continuous monitoring of tents and camps**

The City of Liège's Prevention Plan has set up a procedure for monitoring tents and camps. This monitoring makes it possible to have an ongoing assessment of the number of people living in public space. The challenge is to get these people off the streets through networking.

### **Improve the IWEPS/Social Relay data**

Extending the collection to new partners, simplifying it, capturing new data, better exploiting and analysing the data, are the priority objectives. Introduction of a unique identification code for user services or for part of the public? Agreement of users to give their identity but obviously very difficult to implement the unique code. At the level of needle exchange it works. La Strada/Bruss'help also has this common identifier. The integration of the Ethos light typology in the data collection is another challenge that IWEPS has to tackle.

## **4) Strengthen social support in housing**

Lead: Housing first, RSPL partners, CPAS Liège, DPS - APL partners, 107, RWLP

### **The Housing first / Led team of the RSPL**

The Housing Led scheme provides housing support in the broadest sense. The scheme comprises various projects, including the Tremplin project and Housing First.

The Tremplin project aims to use three low-threshold reception centres (Croix rouge, Abri de jour and Accueil botanique), as well as the street (street educators) to hook up with beneficiaries with whom it is possible to set up social support, define a social integration project with the beneficiary, and accompany the beneficiary towards second-line services.

The aim of the Tremplin project is to support homeless people who attend day shelters towards a social integration project. In fact, ¼ of the people supported are looking for housing as a priority, and have found it.

The Housing First project has a more vulnerable target group that is further away from housing (chronically homeless, mental and/or physical health problems and addiction issues). The HF project currently has 9 FTEs and cannot include any new profiles at the moment, as this would not fulfil the primary mission of intensive support in housing.

Some figures:

The team currently accompanies 54 tenants, of which 37 are intensively followed up, 7 are autonomous, 6 are in institutions (nursing home, hospital, prison), 4 are homeless. 6 tenants have died.

Tenant profile: 11 women and 43 men (20-80%), aged 23 to 72 (average almost 50), average 60 months on the street, income: 62% RIS, 15% disability, 8% unemployment, 8% pension and 5% mutual insurance.

Results: 87% of the tenants are maintained in housing, of which 20% with a change of address, 6% have been transferred to institutions and 7% have lost their housing.

What are the factors for loss of housing?

External factors: lack of mainstream housing, unhealthy housing, maintenance of rights and income, deposit and energy costs (50%), isolation.

Internal factors: reduced team, absence of support for 4 months, boredom due to lack of activities for the tenant.

It is impossible to envisage recovery until the move into housing is sustainable. The figures show that most moves are due to initially inadequate housing. The geographical location of neighbourhoods also increases the risk of relapse. Moves (and consequently changes of PCSW branch) increase the risk of delays in RIS and rental guarantee files.

The housing crisis and, more recently, the energy crisis are increasing the cost of housing.

Once stabilised in housing, there is a need for inter-sectoral cooperation, especially with the mental health and drug sectors.

### **Strengthening support capacity**

The COVID-19 health crisis and the ongoing evaluation of the RSPL/PCS projects and actions show that the support capacity to get people off the streets and keep them in housing is saturated.

The count organised in October 2020 with the FRB identified 117 people with a Housing first profile. Four social workers and a nurse now work in the Housing First Liège project. They accompany a specific group of people who require long-term follow-up. Numerous steps are taken with them concerning their rights, their care, their administrative status, their social integration... Each of these steps is long. Currently, 34 people are being followed intensively, as well as a dozen former users and as many people who are homeless or have lost their homes. The waiting list has been frozen because the team does not have the time to follow up other people. However, informal contacts with local partners show that there are a significant number of service users willing to enter a housing project.

**A second Housing First operator, the Infirmières de Rue (IDR), set up in Liège in 2019. IDR provides support to 8 people in housing, but does not currently receive sustainable public subsidies for its**



actions in Liège, unlike its counterpart in Brussels. You will find attached a detailed note from the association on the possibilities of developing the structure according to additional funding (Annex 1).

Habitat-Service, Thaïs and Racynes (Associations de Promotion au Logement - APL) work in Liège and collaborate with public services (RSPL, CPAS) in the project Devenir Propriétaire Solidaire (DPS). Their public is rather category 3, 5 or 6 of Ethos light, i.e. people who come out of shelters, who live in non-conforming housing or who are temporarily accommodated with friends.

These different actors can increase their capacity to provide support in housing if they have additional funding.

1) Searching for new partners to provide social support in the framework of the "Housing led" and "Devenir Propriétaire Solidaire" projects

The Youth Assistance Prevention Service has set up a "Young People on the Move" working group which has met several times. It has made it possible to identify avenues that should be translated into concrete actions over the coming months to provide better support for 18-25 year olds.

Closer collaboration with the mental health (ISoSL, SCMR) and justice sectors is being sought but has not yet been possible. The recent initiative by the Federal Government to strengthen the mobile teams of the 107 Fusion Liège network with 17.6 FTEs should make it possible to co-construct an offer more appropriate to the needs of vulnerable people. Contacts have been made with the network coordinator Didier KAMPFL in order to study collaborations. "Fusion Liège" participated in the seminar on housing support organised on 8 October 2021.

2) The search for additional funding from Wallonia, the Federal Government and Europe

The federal and regional governments have announced an increase in funding for Housing First teams. In concrete terms, these subsidies will allow the reinforcement of existing teams, but also the implementation of Housing first services throughout the country. The Relais Social is currently waiting for more precise information.

### **Bringing the sectors together and defining a common vision of support**

The historical sector is composed of different public and private actors (shelters, housing promotion associations, day and night shelters, social emergency, housing relays, etc.). Most of the financial means are currently at the service of the actors in this framework. Their roles and objectives are at different levels in the fight against homelessness. Most of the resources are used for emergency work and little for the establishment of sustainable and stable solutions.

The Housing First projects, following FEANTSA's lobbying work over several years, bring a new perspective. Firstly, by taking a philosophical position on the eradication of homelessness (which is obviously also the idea of the historical sector). Secondly, by focusing on a model that is inclusive of people who are totally excluded from the housing market (who represent the 5% most complex situations in the Ethos Light category). The approach in its theoretical part allows the inclusion of populations, which cannot be reached by the current services. The idea is to offer both an emergency solution and a stable solution. The means made available to Housing first/Housing led projects are derisory.

RSPL housing led project and APL

The team is multidisciplinary and multi-institutional. It provides intensive support: mobility of workers, daily transition to housing, support for procedures and activities of daily life. The Liège team is composed of 5 social workers (social assistants and educators), a nurse, a housing sensor and two integration agents.

It can be seen that the Housing First project allows :

- A sustainable reintegration of people by enrolling them in the usual socialisation structures, but also in structures closer to the user such as the family to ultimately allow a sustainable anchorage.
- Access to basic rights (income, health insurance, housing, public services, etc.), which helps to reinforce people's dignity by enabling them to reassert their own identity both in terms of common law and symbolically;
- A significant improvement in well-being and health, and therefore in recovery;
- A significant improvement in well-being and health, and therefore in recovery; A reduction in the number of people using emergency social services;
- The creation of new links favouring transversality and encouraging existing partnerships while diversifying them (mental health, health, socio-professional integration).

Proposal: Work on a broader and more inclusive model for all homeless people between the different actors in place who are funded to provide social support, in particular by developing a common "housing first" approach.

### **The Housing Task Force as a space for case management and the appointment of a referent**

In parallel to the reinforcement of the support capacities, the question arises of the coordination of the list of referents on the basis of the procedure that has been set up by the Housing Task Force.

Following the Astrid Park Emergency Plan, the City of Liège, the RSPL, the CPAS and the Province set up the Housing Task Force in May 2020. Its objective is to ensure better coordination between services in the housing support of the homeless. By setting up a cooperation and support procedure and organising weekly case management meetings, referents have been appointed.

The lack of support and housing capacity means that new referrers cannot be appointed at present.

#### State of play of the number of people monitored by the Housing Task Force:

- 73 candidates are currently included in the TFL;
- 52 people have been able to find housing, 31 of whom are completely independent
- An Excel file is used for monitoring and is updated every week;
- The partners involved in the TFL are Tremplin (Accueil Botanique / Croix-Rouge / Abri de Jour), ICAR, Carrefour Santé Social, Educateurs de Rue, Infirmières de Rue, Abri de Nuit, Amon Nos Hôtes, Plan de Prévention, SmiLe, Housing First-LED, Cap Fly, START MAAS, INUK, CSDF, La Fontaine, Alfa, Thermos.

A multi-disciplinary group of about twenty services allowing us to unite and coordinate actions for greater efficiency.

During the **98** meetings of the TFL, we discussed about **150 situations** and integrated **73 people**, so that **52** were able to find **housing**.

Following an intervention with the frontline workers of the Task Force and the "Becoming a Solidarity Owner" project (DPS), a reflection is underway to organise regular meetings between the two working groups.

Setting up a multi-agency support system for homeless people with a view to providing a sustainable solution in the short, medium and long term.

Pooling of resources and means in order to provide the most appropriate concerted response to a public with multiple needs and a need for support of varying intensity.

With the aim of efficiency, to put forward the expertise of each service in order to define and implement individualised, intensive, comprehensive and multidisciplinary support that will eventually enable the user to leave the street in the long term

1. *CPAS > 1st stage*

- Detection and identification of requests
- Administrative (homeless unit, reference address, etc.)
- Detection of the eligibility of rights
- Identification of needs

The collaboration with the PCSW is the cornerstone of the future support of the Task Force Housing workers. The assessment of the needs allows to establish the level of support necessary for the best possible care.

It is therefore in this first step that the support needs are assessed by the different frontline actors. They will collaborate directly with the SDF Unit and the DUS so that the administrative situations can be assessed as well as possible.

The public must meet the selection criteria: adult, in possession of a residence permit, an eligible file for the SDF cell, regular attendance at the DUS. Homeless people who are not actually and usually resident on the territory will be redirected to their commune of origin.

Homeless people whose response requires hospitalisation/cure/accommodation must be accompanied by a service (DUS, Tremplin, Housing first-Led, etc.) that fosters a good relationship with the reception service and allows the development of an individualised long-term project. It is important to avoid situations that are becoming more stable being jeopardised by a return to the street and/or a premature exit from the institution.

2. *Springboard (RSPL) and CASS > intermediate stage/transversal role.*

- Accompaniment towards housing
- Privileged link between "the street" and the housing support teams
- Tremplin 3 FTE, 20 follow-ups/FTE = 60 people accompanied before entering housing/accommodation/hospitalization

- CASS: a place of consultation for case management, a transversal place (reception of users, health care...)

Users with a high need for support are taken care of by the workers of the Tremplin team. The main objective is that the user should be the subject of case management, which should ultimately lead to the completion of the individualised project (hospitalisation, accommodation, housing)

The teams must be able to work closely together to ensure the case management of users.

The role of the Tremplin team and CASS workers is transversal. They will be involved in identifying users and their needs up to and beyond the point of entering housing.

The CASS will, through its missions, "guarantee" a privileged link, an indispensable connection with users. By responding to the primary needs (particularly in terms of health and hygiene) of the homeless, it could play a central role in the operationalisation of the unit.

### 3. *Street educators*

- Liaison and information officers

In this first phase, the BDUs and referents can play a liaison role to ensure good communication between the services and the users.

### 4. *Housing First-Led - CASS - Landlord campaign > 2nd stage*

- Housing search via Capteur Logement and Campaign ;

- Technical aspects (Campaign via CPAS Housing Relay)

- Accompaniment in housing

The requests identified by the frontline workers in connection with the users whose medium-term solution is housing or accommodation are presented to the whole system bringing together the various partners.

An assessment of support needs is carried out in a concerted manner. The situations are then dispatched between the different services according to their support capacity on the one hand and their own specificities on the other hand (reception of foreigners, of foreign origin, mental health problems, drug use, multiple drug use, disability, long street experience, accident...)

Once the (re)housing lead has been effectively established, the follow-up can be taken over by the most appropriate support team. It should be noted that the people in accommodation will certainly continue to be monitored by the DUS and the Tremplin team in the first instance. The other situations will then be transferred to Antenne CPAS if necessary.

To ensure the support of the project's target public, it is essential that all the services concerned can communicate, collaborate and move forward with a common objective.

Communication between the different partners: essential tools

- A weekly intervision meeting: the aim is to identify the precise needs of the users, their case management and the dispatching between the different support services.
- An Excel document: for security and ethical reasons, in compliance with the RGPD, an Excel document is used for information exchange and case management. The workers can modify it every week during the meetings.
- A liaison sheet: will allow the identification of users requiring support based on the work carried out by the front-line services.
- Telephones: in the interests of efficiency, it is important that workers can communicate quickly.

### *Housing search*

The Housing Sensor is the main source of housing with the Pro Sol Campaign. They will work closely together.

The allocation and matching of tenants/owners is already agreed between the different partners of the Campaign and can therefore remain unchanged.

Each support service will submit an application to both partners. For the sake of consistency, these will be coordinated by the Task Force.

### *A linear form of support*

From the identification of requests to the achievement of a permanent exit from the street, the different services must work together. Indeed, the multiple solutions envisaged in the short, medium or long term will involve (for the majority of situations) a housing support service. These services should therefore be involved from the moment the service user is included in the task force and be available to the 'front line' services that receive the application.

As short as possible, as long as necessary.

It is also necessary to insist on a "continuity" of support. It is indeed essential that the vulnerable public be supported from the moment they are included in the system until their situation is stabilised. This is the strength of the system that is emphasised. The pooling of resources must allow for unlimited support over time.

The Social Emergency Service of the CPAS of Liège, in partnership with the RSPL, compiled a list of people living on the street during the confinement. 230 different people were identified during the showers and street work.

On the basis of this survey, a list of referents was drawn up. It contains three types of information: the identity of the person (surname and first name made anonymous by a three-letter code, date of birth), the housing situation based on ethos light and the referent (institution and social worker).

In order to be able to draw up an interim balance sheet of people on the street for the authorities. It would indeed be interesting to be able to determine the following information for the 230 people: number of people receiving RIS or other assistance from the PCSW, number of "undocumented migrants", number of people who can be included in a pathway to integration, number of people for whom rehousing is being analysed, number of people for whom a solution has been found, number

of people who refuse support, removal from the list of all people who have not given their consent to the exchange of information between members of the task force with a view to rehousing, etc.

For those persons who are monitored by the Housing Task Force, it is proposed to proceed in two steps:

1. Filling in the liaison form for people for whom re-housing or accommodation is possible: collecting information from the network services, defining an action plan with the user and having the user sign the liaison form for consent;
2. The rehousing is carried out and the accompanying service remains available. The situations are regularly re-evaluated in order to pay particular attention to each user. The needs for support are discussed again in order to estimate the time needed to achieve the user's autonomy.

### **Supporting integration through sponsorship and peer support**

To enable the integration of these populations in various fields (employment, training, housing, cultural activities, mobility...). At present, precarious people cannot find housing, money or jobs. How can these people participate in society, feel that they belong to the community?

The implementation of a mentoring and peer support programme for the homeless is an idea to be explored in the framework of a FORUM or in the URBACT Roof local working group.

### **5) Innovative housing solutions (Housing first/housing led)**

Leaders: City of Liège, SWL-SLSP, APL, AIS, Walloon Government, social cooperatives

The objective of the Urbact roof project is to make a paradigm shift, by generalising the housing first/housing led approach based on 8 fundamental principles: housing as a fundamental right; respect, benevolence for all tenants; commitment to work with the tenant as long as necessary; diffuse housing; separation of housing and support; freedom of choice and self-determination; recovery and risk reduction These 8 fundamental principles should be applied to all services and groups in a common "housing first" approach.

A specific working group has been set up in 2021 to study the different possibilities for improving access to public and private housing.

### **Improving access to the private rental market**

The "Becoming a Solidarity Owner" project and the Social Housing Agencies

In Liège, more and more people have difficulties in finding decent housing at an acceptable price because of their origin, their social situation or their health. Faced with the lack of public housing, the "Becoming a Solidarity Owner" project opens up a solution by turning to the private sector in order to improve access to housing for disadvantaged people.

Main objective: to attract solidarity landlords in order to improve access to housing for disadvantaged people. Secondary objectives: to encourage landlords to respect health criteria.

Fight against discrimination in housing and promote non-competition between associations and their target groups in terms of housing research.

Action 2.1.04 of Habitat-Service of the Social Cohesion Plan 2020-2025 of the City of Liège was approved and financed with 60,000 euros to Habitat-Service to fund the employment of the coordinator of the campaign Becoming a Solidarity Owner by the City of Liège and the Walloon Government.

Devenir Propriétaire Solidaire is a partnership project currently composed of 10 partners, all active in housing support: the Plan de Prévention et de Cohésion of the city of Liège, APL Habitat-Service, Thaïs, Fleur et Racynes, the Housing First cell of the RSPL, CARITAS Liège, the Relais Logement of the CPAS of Liège, the Collectif contre les Violences Familiales et l'Exclusion (CVFE), the Infirmiers de Rue Liège and the CRIPEL. The aim of the project is to attract private landlords who show solidarity and to rehouse in the long term the various publics of the partners, which are extremely diverse: homeless people, people from immigrant backgrounds, newcomers, battered women, isolated individuals and large families, etc.

In order to rehouse these groups, we rely on the pooling of the means and skills of the 10 partners as well as on a communication campaign to reach private timeshare owners, wherever they may be in the province of Liège. We share a common programme called Immoassist in which each partner encodes the candidate-tenants for whom it must provide housing support. When a home is found, the coordination proceeds with the selection based on the age of the applications. Our competitive advantage with landlords compared to other operators on the market is precisely this personalised housing support provided by experienced and rigorous social workers. After 3 years of operation: Devenir Propriétaire Solidaire has rehoused 130 people in 68 homes belonging to 41 private owners. In the year 2020-21: 47 people were rehoused in 21 homes belonging to 16 private owners who joined the project.

Following an intervision between the workers of Devenir Propriétaires Solidaires and those of the Housing Task Force, requests and remarks appeared concerning the complementarity of the two structures, the revision of the common support base, communication, transparency and other subjects. The project coordination has therefore decided to meet at the end of 2021-beginning of 2022 in order to put everything on the table and to evaluate the project. This evaluation has already led to some structural decisions:

- Re-establishment of a communication group in order to improve and increase the visibility of the project to the owners with already a whole list of initiatives in order to improve and increase the visibility of the project to private owners but also to public partners.

- Revision of Annex 2 of the project describing the common minimum that each partner must implement. This is a question of the credibility of the project and the equality of the partners

- Examination of the number of applications from each partner according to its capacity to provide support.

Other decisions will follow. But in general, what is most important for DPS is to increase its intake capacity as well as the housing support capacity of the different partners. To achieve this, more resources are needed.

Proposals :

- Take inspiration from the "housing sensor and creator cell" project as practiced in Brussels by l'Ilôt to develop the project.
- Extend the system of the sliding lease by setting up an administrative unit.
- In order to improve access to housing for homeless people (in the sense of Ethos light), a collaboration between the actors of the social support in housing and the Social Real Estate Agency is necessary. This partnership has the advantage of being win - win:
  - o The AIS can devote its time to its core business of 'socialising' private housing and can rely on the expertise of other field services.
  - o Social support services no longer have to "waste" their energy in the search for housing.
  - o The ethos light public's access to quality and affordable housing is greatly improved.
  - o The city improves the effectiveness of its action and the efficient use of its resources.
  - o The improvement of the systems and/or their implementation at local level to overcome, in particular
    - Administrative delays;
    - Refusal of a reference address because one of the criteria is not met (non-effective de-registration, perceived income considered too high);
    - Difficulties in accessing related rights (including loss of income);
    - The lack of assistance in finding housing, which is frequently mentioned.

In all these areas, prevention is essential but not sufficiently applied, which often leads to new difficulties for the people concerned.

### **Les Tournières Cooperative (SCRLFS): Hestia pilot project, driving integration through housing through a tripartite partnership**

Hestia" pilot project: creation of a rental guarantee fund available to associations that organise reception and integration through housing. The feasibility of this fund is currently being tested in the Liège region before being extended to other regions.

Three objectives: 1. to increase the volume of housing in social housing cooperatives; 2. to strengthen the capacity of reception/integration associations; 3. to reintegrate vulnerable groups.

The very concrete partnerships that are being set up should be highlighted in particular:

Street nurses (IDR)

- Medical and social organisation fighting to end homelessness
- Recent branch in Liege in our buildings (Jonruelle)



-House in the city centre, beneficiary moved in at the beginning of June 2021

AMO Reliance & ASBL Vent Debout (Resilience)

-Youth support services

-Project of springboards in the region of Visé

-Building in Hermalle (former people's house)

ASBL Fleur

-APL working with prison leavers and wanting to broaden its audience

-Building in rue Joseph Truffaut: associative project that still needs to find its way

CVFE

-Need for a building during the renovation of their reception centre

-Search for a 3 bedroom house in Saint Léonard

A methodological guide is being prepared and the development of the project in other cooperative structures is being studied (Groupe Le Cortil).

### **Give shelters a grant to organise post-housing follow-up**

Shelters have a very high recurrence rate. It is not uncommon for the same person to repeatedly stay in shelters because they are unable to stay in housing.

At Le Sans Logis, one full-time equivalent would be needed to follow up about forty people a year in their own homes, after they leave the hostel;

- The follow-up would consist of help with moving, furnishing, correct use of the accommodation, installation in a local environment, possible mediation with the landlord in case of problems, but also administrative and budgetary help;

An inspiring experience: An inspiring experience: "Les Trois Portes"

The ASBL Les Trois Portes in Namur focuses its work on social integration and the empowerment of residents in the process of leaving the street (ending homelessness).

The organisation of the hostel into totally independent living units, autonomous flats

Following a fire, the hostel was transformed, with the help of an architect, into 28 self-contained apartments/studios.

The stabilisation service for 8 chronically homeless, ageing and fragile people (indefinite duration)

This is a low threshold reception. Project financed by the Relais social de Charleroi. Two houses. Accompaniment during the day (not at weekends or at night). Recognition as a low-threshold reception centre in progress. The public has an alcohol problem. The team works on harm reduction. Post-shelter housing support offer

163 households (+- 400 people) are supported by a team of 4.3 FTE. The main task is to ensure the payment of rent. They work with 14 partner landlords (+ 2 section 132 units).

### **Access to social housing for the homeless remains difficult due to the large waiting lists.**

Laurence Dinunzio from SWL recalled that as soon as the "Housing first" pilot experience was launched in Belgium in 2013, the Société Wallonne de Logement organised a well-attended awareness-raising session.

Three possibilities are distinguished to access public housing for the homeless:

- A. The classic system based on priority points;
- B. Article 132 of the Walloon Housing and Sustainable Housing Code: specific projects;
- C. Article 32 of the CWHD: motivated derogation on the basis of social urgency and social cohesion.

La Sambrienne (the largest SLSP in Wallonia!) in the Charleroi Region has had a partnership with the Housing first team in Charleroi since 2013. Within this framework, 8 dwellings have been allocated to homeless people (excluding article 132).

Article 132 or the sliding lease poses several problems. It is important not to allocate specific housing to avoid stigmatisation. The preparation of an application for exemption remains administratively very cumbersome.

For the success of the project, social support is essential. It brings results. At La Sambrienne, the rate of unpaid bills is 0% for Housing First tenants, compared to an average of 20% for other tenants, even though this was the management's biggest fear at the start of the project.

HF tenants are 'supported households' as defined by the CWHD.

Finding: "Limitations of allocation through natural route and complexity of allocation through Section 23 waiver".

Solicitation of the SWL for allocation, via a specific project recognised by Wallonia, for the Housing First social support project.

The objective is to redefine the legal framework to facilitate the work of other housing companies.

Article 132 is contrary to the Housing First philosophy.

### **Putting unoccupied housing on the local market**

The City of Liège is carrying out an inventory of unoccupied dwellings within the framework of the communal anchorage. The objective would be to identify housing that could easily be put back on

the rental market, by proposing different modalities of action: soft requisition, management by the AIS, participation in the project Devenir Propriétaire Solidaire, action in cessation if necessary, etc.

### **Renovation of the shelter : from emergency accommodation to a support centre for people leaving the streets**

Thanks to a subsidy from the Integrated City Policy (ICP), the OCMW will receive a subsidy of 2.4 million euros to renovate the building occupied by the Night Shelter while doubling its reception capacity. The idea is to integrate the social emergency service of the PCSW and another service which, as a result of the process, can provide a link to housing for the homeless public.

### **Create alternative housing test areas (light housing, huts and tents, containers, etc.)**

Access to housing is essential because it should be the priority and the goal of all the services in a "housing first" approach. In addition, it relieves the pressure on emergency services (night shelters and shelters) which can respond to new demands. This avoids the need to create new places and additional services, which sometimes have the perverse effect of putting people on the street.

The creation of light housing for homeless people must be accompanied by an in-depth reflection in order to avoid possible perverse effects; for example

- Favouring the support and development of projects led by the people themselves in a bottom-up (rather than top-down) logic;
- To mark out the creation of light rental housing on the territory so that it does not become the only horizon of the (re)housing policy for lack of sufficient means.
- The forms of light housing to be developed must in particular elicit real support from the people concerned and not constitute a choice by default.
- Favour a transitional approach to these forms of housing, with the aim of accessing "traditional" housing, so that they do not become a second-best solution or that people are held captive for lack of other solutions.

Sortir du Bois is a citizens' collective created during the first confinement which consists of providing meals and equipment to the homeless living on the Coteaux de Vivegnis. After several months, the idea of getting out of the emergency was born.

A caravan was set up on private land, at the home of a migrant host. Other people have accepted a caravan on their land, which once again illustrates the dynamics of solidarity in the Liège region.

Sortir du Bois makes two requests:

- The collective is looking for public or private land to install caravans on. A test operation could be carried out on the land of the Régie foncière rue du Plope where the market gardeners of Pousses poussent have settled and seem to agree to accommodate a caravan.
- The collective is looking for partners to provide psycho-social support for people living on the Coteaux.

A partnership with the Faculty of Architecture of the ULiège is to be built to work on light housing projects.

## **Recognising, supporting and encouraging cohabitation**

"The Service de lutte contre la pauvreté advocates that cohabitation in its various forms (household, citizens in solidarity, people living under the same roof) should be recognised, supported and encouraged instead of being sanctioned. This approach presupposes a reevaluation of the status of cohabitant, in order to respect, support and strengthen the will of individuals to live together. The Anti-Poverty Service makes three categories of recommendations:

A first group of recommendations calls for seeking as much as possible to ensure that everyone's rights are guaranteed (such as the right to a decent income, protection of family life, privacy, housing) so that everyone can choose with whom they want to live together, including within a family.

A second group calls for a review of the existing categories of households, so that they are adapted to the new and varied forms of household, life and housing and for their application in accordance with the existing definitions and criteria in the different legislations.

A third group of recommendations concerns the use of existing policy instruments to support the implementation of these recommendations.

This memorandum is addressed to the Federal State as well as to the Communities and Regions. We always mention to which political level the recommendation is addressed. Where several policy levels are competent and cooperation and coordination is recommended, we will use the term 'inter-federal'.

An inclusive policy should be developed in this sense at the local level, in particular through the choices of the types of registration made by the administrations (in particular for grouped housing, co-housing, etc.: registration of separate households rather than grouping under a single household) so as to no longer sanction co-housing and to correspond to the changing social realities.

## **b) Small Scale Actions**

Small Scale Actions have been implemented in the areas of social support, communication and data collection.

### Support

The three-day training in the Housing First approach has enabled the network workers to join the approach. The evaluation shows that it was considered relevant by all participants. The concept of "recovery" is the one that most nourishes professional practice. There is a demand for further training to strengthen the skills needed to provide social support in housing. Participants clearly identified the lack of human resources and housing as the main obstacle to the development of the approach.

### Communication

The workers' intervention had identified the need for information on the coordination of different public policies and actions. The workers also expressed the need for a moment of exchange and to be able to participate in the development of solutions. The organisation of an intersectoral seminar and the evaluation of the DPD project partly met this demand.

### Data

To facilitate the appropriation of the counting methodology, support was provided to two partners: the CPAS of Liège (social emergency and homeless branch) and the Prevention Service of the Aide à la Jeunesse.

## **c) The reference framework for the deliverables**

Who will implement the different actions proposed in the IAP? Should a partnership agreement be proposed to determine the responsibilities of the different partners? How to ensure the steering of the implementation of the IPA?

## **d) Resources**

Specify by which human, financial and material resources of private and public origin the actions will be financed.

The homelessness policy is currently mainly financed by Wallonia via the 2020-2025 action plans of the Relais Social du Pays de Liège and the Plan de Cohésion Sociale de la Ville de Liège.

What are the prospects for local, regional, federal and European funding to develop the Housing first / Housing led approach?

## **e) Risk analysis**

Without a specific housing policy to combat homelessness, any attempt to change the paradigm towards Housing first / Housing led seems illusory.