

HOUSING FIRST

FOR THE HOMELESS

- In a long-term homelessness situation.
- Very vulnerable i.e. who have physical and/or mental health problems and/or addiction.
- For whom traditional solutions have shown their limits i.e. these people have been using services for homeless people for years but are still not able to start an integration process.

DIRECTLY FROM THE STREET INTO HOUSING

Without any other condition than compliance with the tenancy agreement and payment of rent. There is no obligation to enter treatment and no obligation to develop a personal project. Housing is the starting point of the integration process, not the end result.



HOUSING + SUPPORT

This support is intensive and multiple and lasts as long as necessary.

THE GOAL IS RECOVERY



Transposed to different countries in Europe. HF shows its **EFFICIENCY** and **EFFECTIVENESS** wherever it gets implemented. It has a better cost-benefit ratio. **HOUSING FIRST IS EVIDENCE-BASED.**

HOUSING FIRST IN BELGIUM : IT WORKS !

Results and invitation to fast track the exit from homelessness



HOUSING FIRST BELGIUM

Moving away from a copy-paste of the American model, the State Secretary for Combating Poverty launched a **3-YEAR TEST PHASE** in 8 implementation cities¹:

GHENT, ANTWERP, BRUSSELS², MOLENBEEK-SAINT-JEAN, HASSELT, LIÈGE, NAMUR AND CHARLEROI using a grant from the National Lottery.

Housing First teams facilitated access to housing for over **150 VERY VULNERABLE HOMELESS PEOPLE**. They then provided them with intensive support in all areas of life in order to make them retain their home and start a recovery process.

An evaluation team **FOLLOWED** the evolution of part of the tenants for **TWO YEARS** and compared the results with people who use (or that have used) traditional services usually offered to the homeless in Belgium³.

Results bring to light the best implementation conditions of the Housing First model taking into account the Belgian realities.

¹ The «Huis inclusief» project implemented in Courtrai and in the south of East-Flanders has partly joined this experimentation.
² The Brussels-Capital Region.
³ The HF support teams selected the future tenants while the evaluation team looked for participants with similar profiles who use the traditional support services for the homeless or recently re-housed homeless people after using these same services.

CONTINUOUS EVALUATION OF 378 PERSONS



HOUSING FIRST BELGIUM
141 TENANTS



TRADITIONAL SUPPORT SYSTEM
237 PERSONS



137 HOMELESS

100 TENANTS



An implementation guide on Housing First as well as a statistical report are available on:

WWW.HOUSINGFIRSTBELGIUM.BE

Project initiated and supported by the Secretary of State for Combating Poverty with a grant from the National Lottery.



The project was rolled out by the following institutions:



HOUSING FIRST, IT ALSO WORKS IN BELGIUM!

THE HOUSING FIRST TENANTS ARE
LONG-TERM HOMELESS PEOPLE
WITH MANY **VULNERABILITIES**

On average, they have spent over 5 years in a **SITUATION OF HOMELESSNESS***

5 YEARS



Minimum 50% have severe or chronic physical **HEALTH PROBLEMS** **

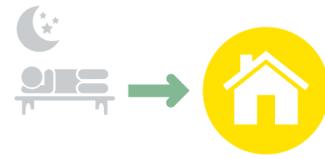
Minimum 50% have a **PSYCHIATRIC DIAGNOSIS***

Minimum 50% have an **ADDICTION** (drugs and/or alcohol)*

Minimum 30% have a **DOUBLE DIAGNOSIS** (mental health problem and addiction)

* This data collected by the evaluators from the participants. There is thus a great chance the prevalence of these vulnerabilities is underestimated.
** 27% of the HFB tenants receive an allowance due to disability.

1 THANKS TO THE HF PRACTICES, HOMELESS PEOPLE WITH HIGH NEEDS ARE ABLE TO LIVE IN HOUSING, DIRECTLY FROM THE STREET



A. THEY REMAIN IN HOUSING. After 2 years, 90% are still in their home.

B. THEY TAKE OWNERSHIP OF THEIR HOMES. It's a process that needs a year but the level of appropriation is higher than the one observed in people who are not supported by the HFB teams.

C. THEY PAY THEIR RENT. A mere 20% fails to meet payment deadlines but this is often solved by the team or a mediator.

D. THERE IS NO PROFILE FOR WHICH IT WORKS BETTER OR LESS WELL. We therefore can't exclude anyone from HF practices, we must dare to use these practices with everyone.

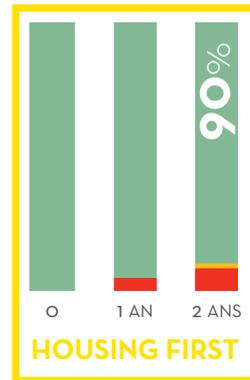
2 HOMELESS PEOPLE WITH LOWER NEEDS ARE ALSO CAPABLE OF LIVING IN HOUSING

A. Shorter-term (on average, 1 year and a half) and less vulnerable (less addictions and mental health problems) homeless people are able to remain in housing (after 2 years, 86% are still in their homes).

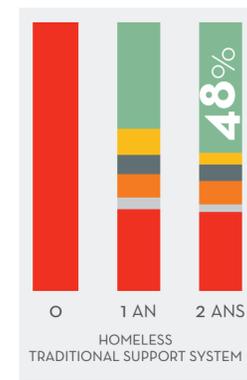
B. This, in the absence of support or, for a minority (14%), with a **non-intensive** support that stops after 12 months.

C. Many of them have first been to a reception centre and have thus been prepared to access housing (47%).

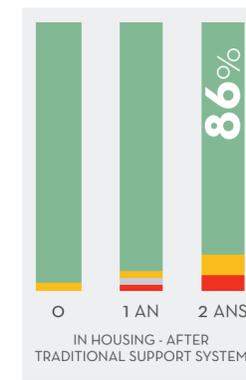
100%



HOUSING FIRST



TRADITIONAL SUPPORT SYSTEM



IN HOUSING - AFTER TRADITIONAL SUPPORT SYSTEM



ROOFLESS (STREET/ NIGHT SHELTER)



HOUSELESS (PRISON)



INSECURE/INADEQUATE HOUSE



HOUSELESS (SHORT-TERM ACCOMMODATION*)
* Example: reception centre



HOUSELESS (HOSPITAL/ TREATMENT CENTRE)



ADEQUATE HOUSE

3 THE TRADITIONAL SUPPORT SYSTEM TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS DOESN'T FACILITATE RAPID ACCESS TO HOUSING

A. 2 years are needed for **48%** to achieve housing.

B. These homes are often of poor quality.

C. Many of them are in hospitals (7%) or prisons (9%) without the prospect of a home when they come out.

4 THE TRADITIONAL SUPPORT SYSTEM TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS HAS DIFFICULT ACCESS TO SOCIAL HOUSING WHEREAS IT IS THE ONLY AFFORDABLE SOLUTION FOR PEOPLE WITH LOW INCOME

A. The small number of homeless persons who leave the streets for housing mainly access the **private rental housing market** (55%).

B. HFB tenants have accessed public social housing due to **exceptional and specific agreements.**

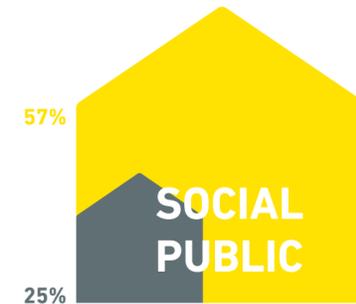
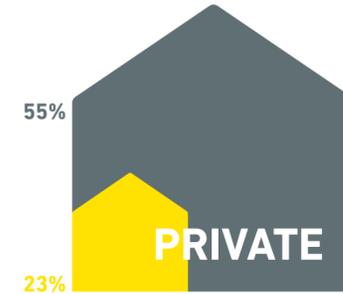
C. The average income of the HFB tenant is **886 €/month.**

D. The main source of income is the **minimum income scheme.**

E. The **social housing market** is financially much more affordable (254 euros/month) than the private market (443 euros/month).

F. The **lease** has a **shorter term with private owners.** (74% of lease agreements don't exceed 1 year). This doesn't encourage the sense of home ownership.

HOUSING FIRST BELGIUM TRADITIONAL SUPPORT SYSTEM



PUBLIC OTHER 3%

SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY HOUSING 2%

REST HOUSE 2%



20% 13%

* Social Rental Agencies

5 HOUSING FACILITATES SOCIAL INTEGRATION*

A. Engaging in administrative procedures and accessing social rights are facilitated when you have a home you can call your own. This happens even faster in the Housing First group (thanks to the support of the HF teams).

B. By comparison, after 2 years, around 50% of homeless people are still not in order with their identity card and 23% don't have a source of income although they are entitled to it.

C. Housing facilitates access to training and work for 1 in 10 tenants, in a gradual way after the first year in housing. For the public concerned by HF, the primary goal is to achieve recovery so these numbers are exceptional.

6 HOUSING RAPIDLY IMPROVES EMPOWERMENT BUT IT TAKES LONGER TO IMPROVE SELF-ESTEEM (2 YEARS ARE NECESSARY)*

7 THE HFB TENANTS ARE IN THE BEST STATE OF HEALTH AFTER 1 AND 2 YEARS

A. We observe a **stabilisation or an improvement**, especially regarding mental health problems.

B. Alcohol consumption worsens in a situation of homelessness.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO CONSIDER:

A. The positive impact of housing on the life of the HFB tenant is a discontinuous process that takes time. **The HF support needs to be as long and intensive as necessary.**

B. Some HFB tenants' state of health remains very fragile. They use hard drugs and show a low level of compliance to treatment (less than 50% follow their medical prescriptions). **The HF teams should have specific resources with regards to health/addiction.**

C. Good relationships with the neighbourhood and the owner contribute to the sustainability of the new housing situation and develops the sense of ownership. **The lack of housing should not make us accept any kind of rental option. Dedicated personnel should be appointed to find adequate housing an serve as mediator when necessary (such as a housing catcher).**

D. The positive impact of HF practices manifests itself slowly then asserts itself after the 1st year. The data collected after two years currently concerns only 30% of the HFB participants. **A longitudinal evaluation process should cover more than two years.**

8 HF PRACTICES ARE NOT EXPENSIVE FOR THE PUBLIC AUTHORITIES AND THEY HAVE A LONG-TERM POSITIVE IMPACT ON INDIVIDUALS AND ON SOCIETY

A. After two years, individual costs related to hospital stay decrease by 46%.

B. HFB support: 17.80 euros/night/person. Night shelters: 55 euros/night/person.

HOUSING FIRST! WHAT ELSE?

SOME LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE HOUSING FIRST BELGIUM EXPERIMENT:

- Describe and record the number of homeless people.
- Match the needs and the offer of services through an efficient orientation scheme.
- Support social innovation and the development of programmes like Housing First.
- Aim for short circuit solutions for durable exit from homelessness and avoid the use of emergency reception facilities.
- Dare to use housing-led programmes.
- Increase access of low income households to quality housing and support innovation in this area.
- Invest in supportive housing services adapted to the needs of the beneficiaries. They should be intensive, multidisciplinary and long-term if necessary.
- Establish a concerted plan to fight homelessness involving all levels of governance in the areas of anti-poverty policy, social integration, urban policy, health, social action, well-being, housing and employment.
- Prevent homelessness by anticipating evictions and exits from youth institutions, hospitals and prisons.
- Longitudinally evaluate the efficiency and the effectiveness of the practices and policies documenting the trajectories of the targeted population.

* This was observed for the HFB group as well as for people housed outside the HFB model