

## EASI - EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL INNOVATION PROGRAMME RIGHTS FIRST

### INNOVATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Introduces a novel approach for Brussels region by pledging to provide a comprehensive service package that includes integrated social rights, housing and employment assistance

### SCALE AND TYPE OF SOCIAL INNOVATION

- Incremental and Process Innovation

### CALL NAME

Establishing and testing integrated interventions aimed at supporting people in (the most) vulnerable situations

### COUNTRY

Belgium

### POLICY AREAS

Fight against poverty and social exclusion  
Guarantee adequate and decent social protection  
Combat discrimination

### TARGET GROUPS

National, regional and local authorities  
Employment services  
Social partners  
NGOs

### COORDINATOR

BRUSS'HELP

### CO- BENEFICIARIES

New Samusocial  
Sant Joan de Deu Serveis Socials - Creu dels  
Molers  
Crisis UK  
Openbaar Centrum voor Maatschappelijk Welzijn  
van Vorst  
Diogenes  
L'ilot - 't Eilandje  
Hobo - Geïntegreerde Thuislozenzorg Brussel

### EU CONTRIBUTION

€ 1,032,219 (80% of the total costs)

### TOTAL COSTS

€ 1,290,276 (estimation)

### DURATION

January 2022 – June 2024

# SUMMARY OF THE ACTION

A large number of homeless people in Belgium have lost access to social rights while others have never had access. “Administrative disappearance” affects those who have lost access to social rights. Citizens can get access to social rights, such as a minimum income, by registering through domiciliation. The lack or loss of a house or a reference address results in exclusion from social rights, making the process of overcoming homelessness extremely difficult. Administrative assistance, as well as assistance in locating housing and job, are required to break this vicious cycle.

The project, which contains three components, aims to assist people living on the streets, in emergency centres or in transit housing: 1) registration with the government in order to (re) activate social rights; 2) assistance in locating housing. Housing facilitators assist people whose rights have been activated - or are about to be activated - in identifying and capturing housing solutions; 3) integration to the labour market. The stability of having an address and, as a result, access to resources and social aid, is crucial when being coached, looking for work and being directed while engaging in economic activities.

**Keywords: social rights; administrative support; homeless people; housing facilitation; access to employment**

Many homeless people in Brussels are not registered with the municipality or the responsible Public Welfare Centre. People are unable to access any social benefits, aside from emergency medical care, unless they register at one of these offices. Furthermore, Brussels is in the midst of a housing crisis, with approximately 5,313 individuals roofless or living in substandard homes or in emergency/transit centres. This number has increased from 500 in 2008. This implies that there has not only been a significant increase in homelessness in Brussels, which has to be addressed, but also that many homeless persons are unable to receive their social benefits.

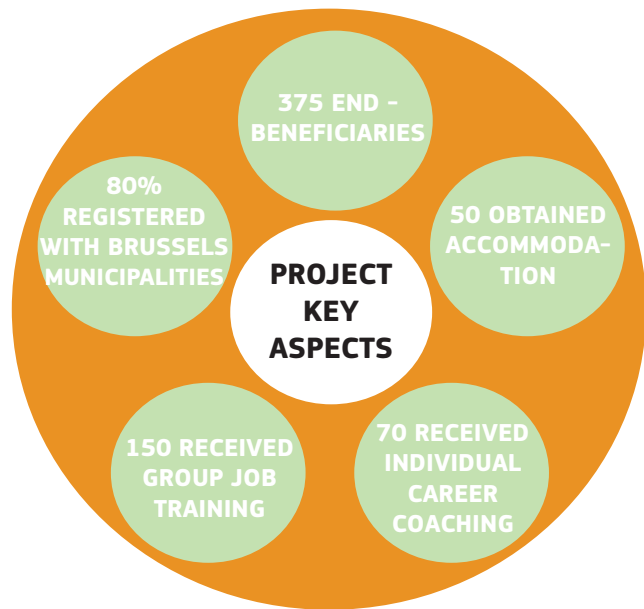
“The lack of registration means that the homeless people concerned do not have a residential address. This, in turn, means that they have no access to their social rights and entitlements except for urgent medical care.”

## OBJECTIVES

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The pilot's immediate goal is to re-register beneficiaries with the appropriate authorities so that they may continue to receive their basic benefits. The goal is to help recipients obtain homes, despite the current housing crisis in Brussels, and eventually to integrate them into the labour market.

## CONTEXT AND NEEDS



The project focuses on homeless persons who are not registered with the government and, consequently, are unable to exercise their social rights. As a result, the initiative aims to reach out to homeless people in order to re-register them and give targeted housing and job assistance.

Rights First has three components: 1) administrative registration in order to (re) activate social rights; 2) coaching to find housing; 3) integration into the labour market. Integrating these three complementary strands would facilitate the development of a holistic approach to tackling homelessness.

## RESULTS

Rights First does provide a set of desired outcomes. A number of 375 end-beneficiaries are expected to be treated as part of the pilot. This equates to about a tenth of the total homeless population in Brussels. By the end of the intervention, it is projected that around 300 of the 375 beneficiaries, or 80%, would have registered with their relevant Brussels municipalities. Also, 190 recipients are projected to have their social rights reactivated; 50 to have obtained accommodation; 70 to have received individual career coaching; and 150 to have received group job training out of the 300. In addition, 30 additional housing alternatives are scheduled to be mobilised as well as ten employer collaborations.

“The Belgian system of social service delivery in Brussels has been working the same way for 30 years now. Rights First project will search for new ways of tackling homelessness because it has been increasing in the city.”

“Firstly, service providers coaching homeless directly could work better together. Secondly, there is also the possibility of strengthening partnership with public organisations such as public centres of social actions and also the public employment organisation.”

“About ten years ago, there were less than 500 homeless people in Brussels. Nowadays that figure sits at approximately 5,000.”

**rights first.brussels**

The innovativeness of Rights First may be divided into three categories. First, it introduces a novel approach for the Brussels region. Previously, homeless persons could only get help from a single homelessness service provider, who would only deal with one of the various challenges they could experience. Rights First intends to remedy this by pledging to provide a comprehensive service package that includes integrated social rights, housing and employment assistance. Second, Rights First represents a fresh approach to stakeholder collaboration. In Brussels, the regional delivery of social rights and services has remained constant for the past 30 years. As a result of the fragmentation of service delivery, distinct public and private service providers would find it difficult to interact with one another. Finally, the use of monitoring and evaluation tools are central features to substantiate the project itself, its progress towards its objectives, its weaknesses and achievements, and how it should evolve to fulfil the beneficiaries' needs.

## TRANSFERABILITY AND UPSCALING

The project team believe that the pilot's ultimate aim is upscaling or transfer. Indeed, they believe that the model tested in this project might be adapted to a variety of additional characteristics. The present focus, however, is on implementing the project and acclimating the project's stakeholders to change. As a result, concrete plans for upscaling will be developed only near the end of the project.



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## PROJECT CANVA



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