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## CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

### **Building a caring network of formal and informal help (offline and online) in a super-diverse neighbourhood**

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Several organisations (i-mens, Steunpunt Mantelzorg, Hoplr, city of Aalst, sickness funds, Eerstelijnszone regio Aalst, informal carers organisations...) came together for the project 'Neighbourhood Building Blocks' to create a caring neighbourhood in a super-diverse area in Aalst, a city close to Brussels, Belgium. It is an area with an older 'Belgian' population and a younger population with a migration background. People in this neighbourhood are generally less wealthy, less healthy and more socially isolated than in other areas in Flanders.

The goal of the project is to ensure that people only must ask help once to get the appropriate answer or support at the right time. To achieve this, we are creating a virtual and physical network of informal and formal support in the neighbourhood, putting together several existing building blocks: capacities of neighbours, professional care, volunteers, support for informal carers, a digital platform of neighbours (Hoplr) and the building complex of i-mens – a care organisation, with an office building for their home care services, a day care and service flats. The underlying assumption is that everyone has something to contribute and something to gain from the network.

We have 3 intervention axes: 1. Neighbourly help network 2. Empowerment of informal carers 3. Connecting the professional care network with the informal network. We have a neighbourhood concierge and connector. She connects the 3 axes of the project, and ensures that the project is driven by and embedded in the neighbourhood, together with the key partners.

1. We start from the capacities of neighbours (ABCD-model) to create neighbourly help networks, both offline and online. We match people based on their capacities and needs, and track this through a dashboard (people matched – help provided – after care). To find capacities and needs we organise activities and informal contact at the gathering room of the service flats and the meeting rooms of i-mens. All activities have 3 functions: information in group on rights and possible support, conversation and encounters in group (social contact), and one-on-one questions and support with individual cases.

2. Learning from the experience of previous caring neighbourhoods, we give specific attention to informal carers. We know that they find it more difficult to rely on help from neighbours and professional caregivers. Empowering and informing informal carers through specific interventions ensures their involvement and support from the network.

3. We connect professional actors (care organisations, local traders, ...) with each other and with the informal actors, tailored to the needs and capacities of the neighbourhood. We aim to make professional support and care more accessible to people in the neighbourhood. At the back-office side, we are developing a decision-making tree so we know which question for help can be resolved

by which formal or informal actor. The dashboard to match neighbourly help will be expanded in order to track matches with formal actors.

We will present the first results of the project, and share experiences of neighbours, informal carers and professional actors.