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The Parisian partners of the GME, governed by the Aurore association, are as follows: the CCAS (centre of social action) of the city of Paris, the ACSC (Association of the Secours Catholique against exclusion), the Charonne association and the Falret project.

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Research team is lead by professor Pascal Auquier:
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In France, almost 30% of the 100,000 people living on the street on a permanent basis suffer from a serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia, added to very poor general health. These people will die 30 to 35 years earlier than the general population due to the lack of healthcare and the dramatic, violent living conditions.

These people slip between the cracks of the classic support devices set up by the State and associations and, when faced with this, social and medical officers are often powerless to act.

Providing adapted, effective solutions is essential with regard to solidarity. Successfully generating concrete improvements where the challenge seems to be at its most difficult, will also provide proof that we can overcome the most extreme form of exclusion: life on the streets.

An ambitious experiment

The « Housing First » program aims at experimenting with a new way of managing homeless people suffering from severe mental illness by offering them direct access to ordinary, sustainable housing by means of intensive support on both a social and sanitary level.

A total of 800 people will be involved in this experiment on 4 different sites (Paris, Marseille, Toulouse, Greater Lille), over 3 years supported by 40 professionals and monitored by a consortium of research teams.

Already being tested in the United States since 1990’s and more recently in Canada, this type of programme has produced conclusive results: 80% of the people involved stayed in their housing after 4 years, their quality of life and health improved and savings were generated by the local community, in particular due to fewer hospital stays, reduced use of the emergency services and even due to reduced use of the penitentiary institutions.

A program for social innovation

- a direct access to housing, without any treatment or abstinence-based obligations, and without passing through temporary accommodation.
- a housing rental formula that secures on-time rent payments to the lessor, intensive support of the participants and any reconditioning of the apartment as required.
- an intensive and multidisciplinary support to those taking part: the teams are comprised of healthcare professionals (psychiatrists, addictionologists, GPs and nurses) and social officers, housing specialists or even «healthcare mediators-peer educators» who themselves either used to live on the street or have experience of mental illness. Support covers all aspects of life (health, housing, employment, citizenship, etc.) and aims at making these people key players in their own recovery.
- a partnership-based approach: from a national point of view, a steering committee brings together all of the major administrations concerned (housing, social cohesion, health), associations and healthcare professionals; partnerships are created in the field between the hospital sector, the medico-social sector, associations, housing stakeholders, local State services and the local governments.
- a scientific assessment joined to the programme: on each site, per 100 people benefiting from direct housing access, 100 more are also monitored by the research team and benefit from classic services, which enables a precise comparison to be made between the two different ways of managing the homeless and their respective advantages. The results of this research program will be used to determine appropriate means for efficiently housing the homeless with dignity.

An interministerial initiative

The « Housing First » programme was launched on the initiative of the Ministers for Housing and Health. It is state-financed and led by the Interministerial delegation for accommodation and access to housing for homeless or inadequately housed people, in direct contact with the General Directorate for Health and the General Directorate for Social Cohesion (Health ministry).


for more information, see the video of the program on Dailymotion channel Ministry of Housing:

photo Emmanuel Grimault

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