

Care Living Labs Flanders: Have they incorporated the policy goals?

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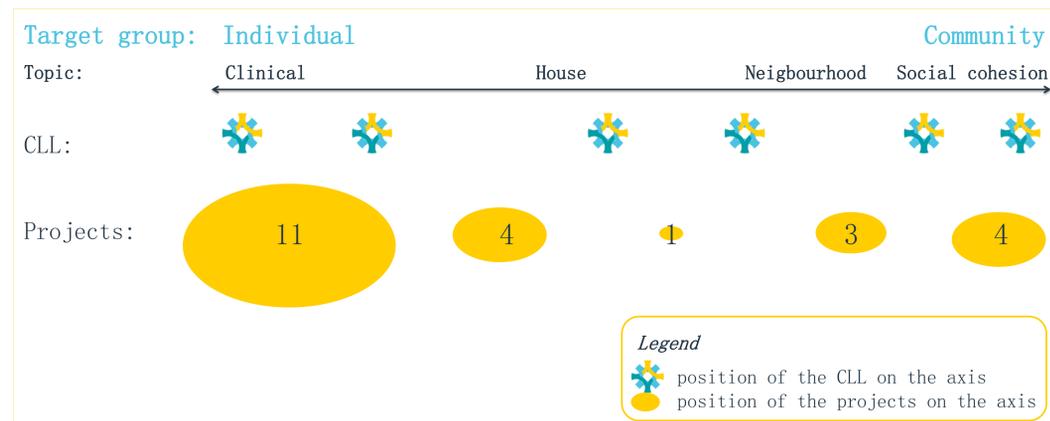
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INTRODUCTION

In 2012, the Flemish government launched a call for Care Living Labs (CLL) targeting on **innovation in the care for older adults**. CLL aims at facilitating the innovation of new care concepts, services, processes and products, in cooperation with the users, and to test them in real life settings. Main goals for the target group of older adults are to:

- (1) live independently as long as possible,
- (2) improve the home environment and
- (3) counter social isolation.

Six CLL, with each their own focus, generally divided into four topics were selected, comprising in total **23 projects** (Figure 1). CLL are synonym for "a platform for testing and experimentation space" which support projects. The aim of this study is to analyze if the CLL and their projects has incorporated the main policy program goals.



METHODS

First, an inductive analysis was performed, based on documents of the submitted proposals and semi-structured interviews with CLL and project coordinators, to explore the views of the individual living labs on care innovation for elderly in several domains. Secondly, a deductive analysis was performed based on previous results to explore the presence of these concepts in the CLL plans and their projects.

We define the concepts in the analysis as follows:

- (1) **Live independently as long as possible:** The ability of older adults to function autonomously in all areas of life (basic, instrumental and advanced activities of daily living) with as little professional support and care as possible (Vilans, 2013).
- (2) **Improve the home environment:** Paying attention to and elaborating areas of the "age-friendly city" concept (WHO, 2007) in the home environment.
- (3) **Counter social isolation:** Focusing on participation on one or more different levels, namely: social, cultural and societal.

Goals are explicitly present when they are described in the proposal or indicated during the interview. Implicitly present means that the goal can be derived from the proposal or interview. Absent indicates that the goal is not provided.

RESULTS

The main policy goals of the government were broadly formulated. No explicit definitions of the concepts were present. **The CLL mentioned all the main goals** (Table 1), **whereas CLL projects focused on certain goals** (Table 1). Projects with a more community-directed focus, such as informal (neighbourhood) care and social cohesion, specified explicitly the 3 goals. In total 8 projects mentioned all the program goals, whereas 2 projects didn't describe any of the policy goals. Moreover, 'to live independently' emerged 18 times explicitly and 3 times implicitly, where almost all projects paid attention to instrumental and/or advanced activities of daily living. 'Improve the home environment' is respectively 20 times present (19 and 1), with most attention paid to age-friendly city areas "communication and information" and "health and care". Less attention is paid to the goal counter social isolation, respectively 6 and 2 times.

Table 1. Overview mentioned goals of the CLL projects.

| Main policy program goals | Care Living Labs | | | | | | Care Living Labs projects | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|---------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| (1) Live independently as long as possible | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly |
| (2) Improve the home environment | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | |
| (3) Counter social isolation | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | Explicitly | |

Legend: explicitly present ■; implicitly present ■; absent ■.

CONCLUSIONS

All CLL mentioned the three main goals. A diffuse pattern of goals between the projects can be noted. The main purpose of the projects concerns "live independently as long as possible", and the least applied goal is "counter social isolation". Projects should focus on at least one main policy program goal. These findings might induce some risks, but also opportunities with regard to the main policy program goals.

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*KIO is an interuniversity consortium studying innovations in elderly care in Flanders. The consortium consists of Mark Leys & Lien Pots (OPIH-VUB), Ellen Gorus, Patricia De Vriendt & Charlotte Brys (GERO-VUB), Ezra Dessers & Geert Van Hootegem (CESO-KU LEUVEN), Marc Jegers & Lukas Verstele (iCher), Patricia De Vriendt & Juul Lemey (Arteveldehogeschool), Bart Jansen (ETRO-VUB), Bart Mistiaen & Bart Grimprez (HOWEST). The consortium is financed by the Flemish agency for Innovation by Science and Technology (IWT).