



Zoom-in I

July 2020

From House to Home

Zoom-in on the Social and Technical Selection Criteria of
ICCARus (Gent Knapt Op)



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1 Introduction

This Zoom-in focuses on the most intricate and complicated part of the Gent Knapt Op project so far: the selection criteria for participation. The selection criteria, which in this case could also be called the procurement process that attracted beneficiaries to participate, helped Gent Knapt Op to choose the right participants owning the right houses. The aim of Gent Knapt Op in the first year of the project has been to find up to 100 vulnerable families and houses in Ghent that need urgent renovation (€30,000 in value awarded). Families that are eligible to participate according to the project requirements receive funding to transform their house to a home. Although it has been a time race to engage participants all around the city, Gent Knapt Op has set up a very thorough and innovative system of evaluating case by case and guiding participants through the process to take part.

This Zoom-in examines the process (illustrated Phases 2 and 3 in the diagram below) of the participant selection, according to criteria, and determining the social and technical information needed in relation to the house selection process and the renovation plan. Under the Social Welfare guidance, a multiplicity of different partners and expertise have been engaged throughout these phases in order to successfully move to Phase 4: finalising participants and launching the renovations.

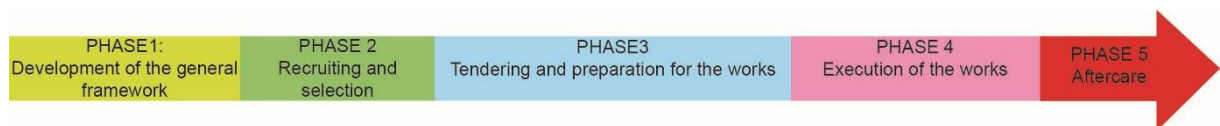


Diagram: The Gent Knapt Op project process

The following Zoom-in is separated into 3 sections, analysing the beneficiary procurement process according to the participation cycle:

- **Open Calls and Recruitment:** The first section covers the public calls (i.e. open calls, target groups, etc.) for reaching out to the public and how participants learned about the project.
- **Selection Process:** The second section focuses on 'compiling the dossiers' of the participants: the technical and social criteria created by the public administration and the assorted partners of Gent Knapt Op that the participants need to meet to be eligible.
- **Signing the agreement – Terms and Conditions:** Finally, the third section details the contractual relationship between the beneficiary and the City of Ghent when the final agreement is signed.

From 'House to Home' maps the process followed by the City of Ghent and the Gent Knapt Op beneficiaries towards this new 'union and partnership' that creates an innovative sustainable model of adequate housing conditions and therefore creating a Home for many Ghent families.

2 Open Calls and Recruitment

Since 2019, Gent Knapt Op has already launched three public calls in the city with more than 80 participants already qualified for the project (there are 38 signed agreements, 14 in final phase ready to be signed and 44 in the process of validation). In total, more than 600 people have applied to the calls and showed interest in participating. A series of different communication strategies were applied in order to spread the word and attract participants. Flyers, leaflets, posters, neighbourhood consultations and a digital dissemination strategy through online media, such as Facebook and local news groups were used. In addition, a team of social workers were engaged for more in-depth information and tête-a-tête criteria discussions with applicants.

a. Enrolment Conditions: This is one of the most crucial parts of the initial recruitment process. Social workers held individual discussions with potential participants regarding the project conditions. During this stage, a detailed explanation of the regulations was given, in particular the formula of the subsidy retention (i.e. paying back the loan). The social workers gathered information from interested parties in order to do a first assessment for eligibility. This assessment is explained further in the next section, “Selection Process”.

b. Target Groups: Gent Knapt Op has tried to spread the project to different vulnerable target groups throughout the city by adopting different criteria and recruitment strategies accordingly. The project innovates by addressing and making new rules while trying to cover a larger amount of people and areas in the city. As Gent Knapt Op has managed to upscale already from the previous pilot project (Dampoort Knapt Op) by including larger city areas and target groups. The target groups involved are usually the ones that are left out from other forms of welfare subsidies.

1) Captive residents:

The first two calls focused on the target group named the ‘captive residents’: vulnerable home owners who, in many instances, inherited their homes or managed to purchase it under a housing loan but are living in very poor conditions. Those houses do not meet the Flemish housing code and residents are unable to upgrade them. In Ghent, an estimated 6,000 households fit the definition of ‘captive residents’.

From these two initial calls, a total of 40 families and houses met the criteria:

Neighbourhood	PARTICIPANTS
Brugse Poort - Rooigem	19
Dampoort - Sint Amandsberg	8
Muide - Meulestede - Afrikalaan	5
Rabot - Blaisantvest	8
Total number	40

Table 1: Participants by neighbourhood

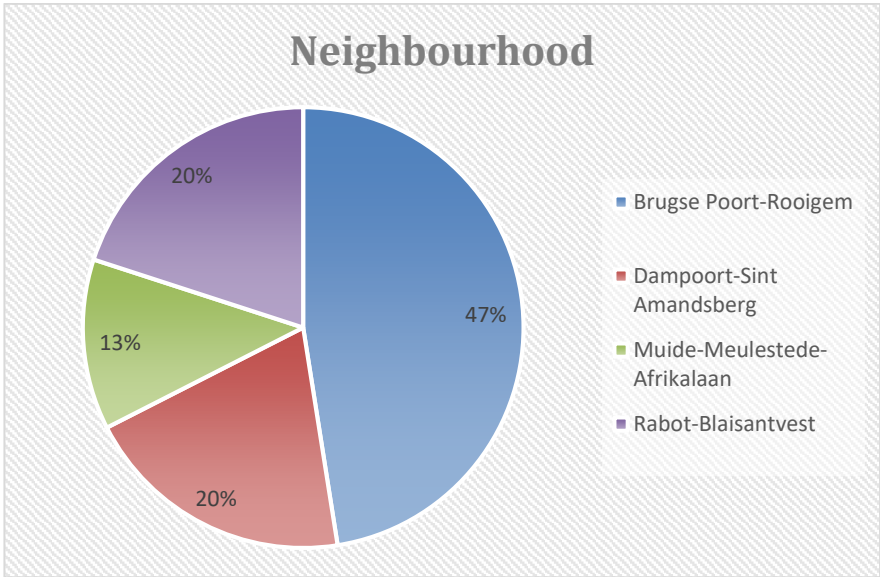


Chart 1: Participants by neighbourhood

Age	PARTICIPANTS
20-30	1
30-40	8
40-50	18
50-60	11
≥ 60	2
Total number	40

Table 2: Participants by age range

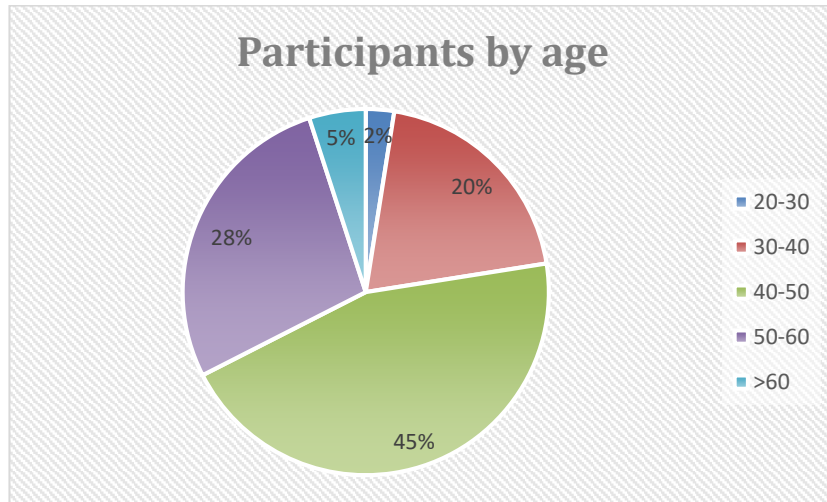


Chart 2: Participants by age range

Household income	PARTICIPANTS
Normal wage	29
Unemployment benefits	3
Subsistence allowance	2
Sickness benefit	6
Total number	40

Table 3: Participants by household income

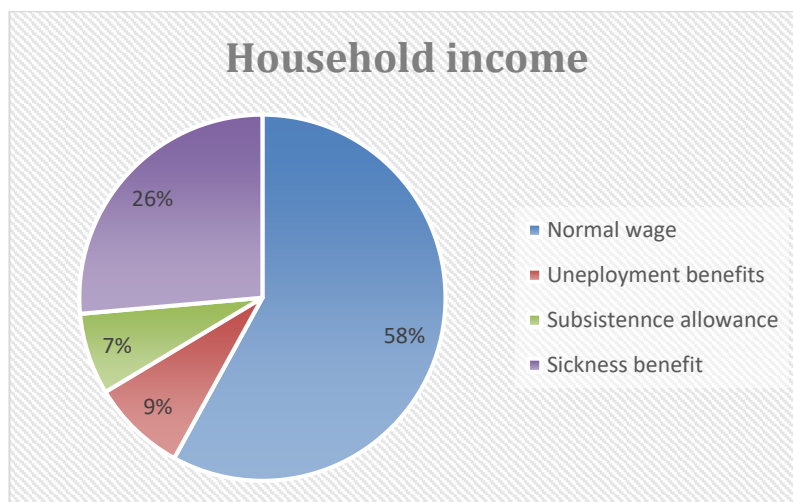


Chart 3: Participants by household income

Family composition	PARTICIPANTS
Single	8
Single with child(ren)	13
Living together without child(ren)	2
Living together with child(ren)	17
Total number	40

Table 4: Participants by family composition

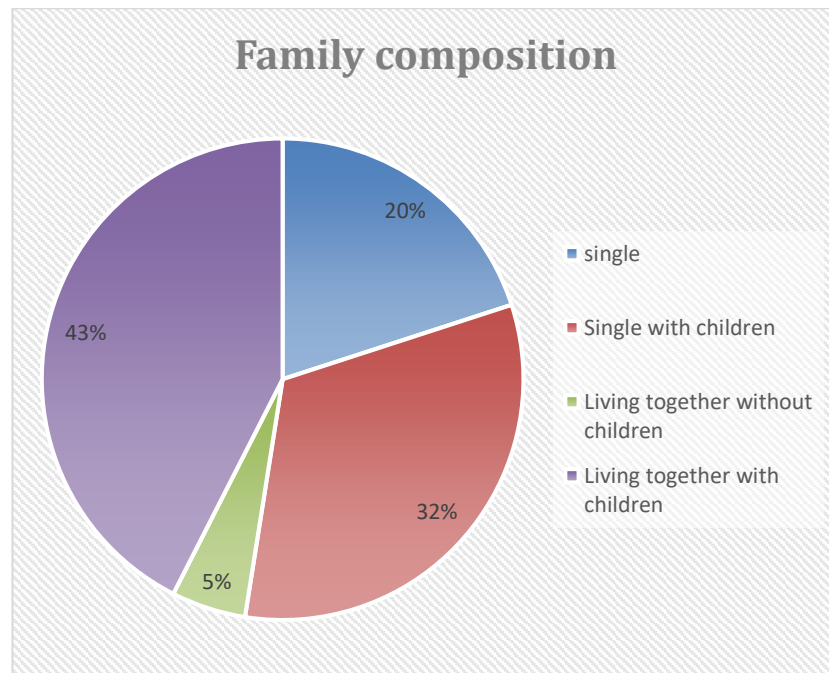


Chart 4: Participants by family composition

As a result from the above information, we can conclude that from the Captive residents target group the highest percentage are from *Brugse Poort – Rooigem* between the age of 40-50 years living with children and earning a normal wage.

The Third call, launched in February 2020, aimed to include 3 new target groups:

2) Elderly homeowners:

A group targeting vulnerable elderly homeowners (over 55 years). This target group owns a house but they are not able to bring it up to standard and are in need of urgent house adaptations to meet their physical needs (according to age and vulnerability). Gent Knapt Op is still in the process of evaluating this group of participants, and an estimated 13 elderly homeowners will be involved in the next project phase.

3) Captive renters:

Captive renters one of the most complicated target group of the three since it tries to deal with landlords who rent their property in Ghent and provide properties in inadequate rental condition (not compliant to Flemish Housing Code). Including this target group is an attempt by the city of Ghent to expand and improve the private rental market, by renting out these houses through a social rental office for 9 years as part of the agreement. Unfortunately, no captive renters signed in.

4) Captive co-owners:

The third new target group are captive co-owners; these are captive owners whose home is in co-ownership (e.g. apartments). They often do not have the financial possibilities to participate in the renovation decided by the co-ownership. One captive co-owner is in the final phase before signing the agreement.

Gent Knapt Op tests and innovates by trying to include more and more different vulnerable groups in the project. Each target group requires a different communication strategy, approach and criteria that are approved by the Municipality and all its partners. Within a year, Gent Knapt Op has managed to launch four phases of open calls, signed 38 agreements with participants, has 14 dossiers ready to be signed, has 44 dossiers still in the running and is ready to launch the construction phase.

This Zoom-in will mainly focus on the target group 'captive residents' as they have been the main focus of Gent Knapt Op in the first period of launch and have already concluded the first phase.

3 Selection process

Gent Knapt Op has created an innovative process for evaluating and selecting candidates. The Ghent Public Centre of Social Welfare (PCSW), a key institutional partner of Gent Knapt Op, created a set of social and technical criteria in collaboration with the city of Ghent. These criteria were agreed with the Municipal council and had a main objective to reach the most vulnerable citizens within the agreed target group. PCSW, which has expertise and technical knowledge from a previous refurbishment project called "Dampoort Knapt Op", gave input for the social and technical screening and selection process of the project target group.

The selection process is challenging for the candidates since they need to be active, collaborative and patient, as it takes time and at any point they can be proven ineligible. Candidates in many cases are vulnerable citizens who are already trying to deal with difficulties of survival. Therefore, **this process needs to be as protective and simple as possible**. Social workers play **a key role** in accommodating the process. It is often also observed that candidates are afraid and do not trust the process, therefore **the relationship of the potential candidate with the social worker** becomes very important. The social workers assisted the project by communicating the complex regulations and phases and also by allowing sufficient time with each family. Gent Knapt Op has managed to create easy communication material in which complex legal issues have been translated to simple human meanings.

The selection process has three phases:

a. Registration/Initiation stage: The candidate is guided through the process to apply, although the candidate may drop out or prove to be ineligible. Basic criteria for the captive owners:

- The candidate has a **limited current disposable income**¹. The average family income of the last 3 months is calculated with the standard budget² and allowing a maximum of 20% over the standard. In order to calculate disposable income, other parameters are taken into account such as children under the age of 25 living in the household, proof of replacement income, disability, etc.
- The candidate **owns only one property**. The candidate should not have any other property (land, house, etc.) in any country. The starting point for this criterion is the fact that someone

¹ This is calculated with the Belgium budget calculator: <https://remipro.be/remi/calculator/index.php>

² The standard budget is the minimum income that is required to be able to live in a decent human condition in current Flemish society

with a second ownership actually has the budget to renovate. Here, nuance is possible when a property does not provide an "additional income". Deviation from this rule is therefore only possible with thorough motivation and will be submitted for approval.

- The candidate has a **fire insurance** for the relevant property.

Only if the candidate meets the registration conditions can they go to the evaluation stage.

b. Compiling the Dossier/Evaluation stage: The selection process is based on a point system which is divided in two categories: social requirements and technical requirements. A dossier is compiled for each candidate who is interested, and after a thorough economic and architectural investigation, a grade is given out of 100. The closer the score to 100, the higher the vulnerability and the greater chance for the candidate to be selected. This phase takes more time since both social and technical evaluations need to be done in order for the candidate to proceed to the third stage.

1) Social criteria: A candidate must score 60 points out of 100 in the social evaluation. In this stage, a thorough examination of income, living condition, educational level, etc. is realised by Gent Knapt Op and the candidate.

- **Limited current disposable income:** The income of the candidate is compared to expenses the person or family need(s) to survive. This is compared to the standard budget and is calculated with the Belgium Budget Calculator.
- **Average net taxable income:** There is a clear distinction between the average net taxable income and the current disposable income. The net taxable income is the income of 2, 3 and 4 years ago; the current income is about today. In the meantime, income may have risen or fallen. In order to reach the vulnerable target group, it is desirable to check both incomes.
- **Loan and mortgage plans:** Candidates must share information on mortgage or loan plans they have taken in relation to bank interests, monthly repayment, etc.
- **Proof and price of property purchase³:** The focus of the project is on modest homes. Too high a purchase price is an indication that it is not a modest home and most probably won't be eligible for renovation.
- **Current loan burden:** Depending on measuring the monthly and yearly loan repayment. The higher the percentage of the monthly income per family spending on repaying the higher awarded score.
- **Current family composition:** Family composition is certified by the city of Ghent. Depending on the number of children, a more spacious home is needed and the cost of living increases. Therefore, more children means a smaller budget to renovate. More children in a family leads to a higher vulnerability score.
- **Replacement income – Activation:** A single person receives a high score because he / she must bear the financial risk alone. A candidate with a replacement income (i.e. unemployment income) scores higher than a candidate with income from employment because the risk of a fall in income or a loss of income is greater.
- **Level of Education:** Education level is determined by certified Secondary, Vocational or University level. The lower the level of education, the higher the risk of vulnerability. This criterion must always be placed in proportion to the other criteria. A high education does not necessarily mean that a candidate cannot participate. A final year student, such as a single

³ The price of the property purchased in 2019 is calculated using the following tool:
<http://immulator.stadim.be/nl/immulator-test.asp>

studying engineer, does not belong to the target group. But, for example, a highly educated single person with 4 children who is receiving unemployment benefits can participate.

- **Budget Management:** The candidate is offered an in-depth counselling. This stage includes a thorough research of financial affairs, debt mediation and budget support.
- **Health:** Candidates need to provide proof of vulnerability and other relevant health issues, if any. If the candidate income includes vulnerability benefits, and integration benefits they score higher than a candidate with an income from work. Also, monthly medical costs are included in the score calculation. A vulnerability benefit gives an indication of lower income and fewer chances of generating income in the future.
- **Commitment to the City of Ghent:** The candidate needs to demonstrate his / her commitment to the city by the number of years they have lived in Ghent.
- **Commitment to the property:** The candidate needs to demonstrate his / her commitment to the city by the number of years living at the property.

The social vulnerability score determines the level of vulnerability of the candidates, and more vulnerable candidates score higher. The score is calculated as a whole and not based on any isolated criterion. The total criteria determine the score and therefore the degree of vulnerability. An average candidate for the project scored more than 30 points.

2) Technical criteria: A candidate needs to score 40 points out of the 100 in technical criteria to be eligible for the project. The Flemish Housing code sets the framework for the technical criteria collected, as it aims to offer every citizen the right to decent housing. Homes must meet the basic living quality requirements. A thorough housing survey is performed by Domus Mundi, a partner agency of Gent Knapt Op, in order to establish the quality of the house according to the Flemish Housing Code. A higher score reflects a worse housing condition and poor living condition. The priority of the inspection is the health conditions and safety of the house.

- **Flemish housing code:** 1 to 12 points are assigned according to the report of the municipality, with a score of 12 meaning that the house is very poor in basic housing quality, according to the Flemish housing code.
- **Co-intoxication and hazard:** 0 to 5 points are assigned, with a score of 5 if the boiler or heater is unsafe.
- **Electrocution or fire hazard:** 0 to 5 points are assigned, with a score of 5 if acute danger is present.
- **Moisture and roofs:** 0 to 5 points are assigned, with a score of 5 if severe moisture damage is present.
- **Glass in living rooms:** 0 to 5 points are assigned, with a score of 5 if 80% or more of the windows are single glazed.
- **Roof insulation:** 0 to 5 points are assigned, with a score of 5 if 80% of the roofing is not insulated.
- **Budget meter for energy consumption:** The budget meter measures the energy consumption including heating. The higher score, the less heating is available for the house. 0 or 3 points are assigned, with a score of 3 if the houses is not heated.

This gives a total of max 40 points in the technical evaluation. A house should score at least 15/40 to participate. After the main scoring, Domus Mundi makes an estimation of the renovation works needed in order to be compliant with the Flemish Housing Code. This list is supplemented by works that would improve the living condition and the works the owners would like to carry out.

This is also translated in an estimated budget. Houses that exceed the €30,000 in repairs to be compliant with the Flemish Housing Code, meaning the house is either very large or in very poor condition, are excluded from the project. If the repair budget is €30,000 or less, the candidate can go to the next phase.

The Gent Knapt Op house renovation plan does not include:

- Normal maintenance work and repairs
- Beautification works (painting, wallpapering etc.)
- Working on spaces without a residential function (professional spaces, outbuildings, gardens etc.)
- The construction of a garage that is not integrated in the home.

c. Valuation stage: After a candidate passes through the social and technical evaluations and their dossier is compiled and is handed over to the selection committee. A detailed individual renovation plan is drawn up per property.

The City of Ghent appoints an external chartered estimator to determine the value of the home. The candidates have also the right to use their own estimator at their own expense. The home value, when determined and agreed, is noted in the final agreement.

Once the owners agree with the renovation plan and the value estimation, they are on the official list of candidates.

Most houses selected for the project follow this typology in Ghent:



RIJWONING: A house that is built in a row of other houses is usually called a 'row house' in Belgium. These houses have only 2 facades, and two adjacent neighbours.



ARBEIDERSWONING: A workers' house that is intended to be rented out to workers and craftsmen. These are mostly small row houses built especially for this target group from the second half of the 19th century.

d. Selection Committee: As soon as the dossier is compiled by the partners and the participants and all information has been gathered, it is sent to the selection committee for approval. The selection committee is formed by 2 representatives of the Public Centre of Social Welfare of Ghent, 2 representatives of the Housing Department of the City of Ghent and one representative of the Inspectorate for Living, Building and the Environment. The selection committee investigates:

- All registered candidates have gathered all documents
- Overview of the files, admission criteria and the calculated score
- Detailed file overview according to the Public Social Welfare conditions

The selection committee is authorized to request additional information along the lines of the investigation of the motivation of the candidate, such as commitment, etc. The committee will decide if the file is admissible within 20 working days. Within the 30 working days, Gent Knapt Op will communicate with the participant if they are selected to participate.

SOCIAL RESEARCH	Score	Maximum score
Current disposable income		8
Average net taxable income		5
Length of the loan to be repaid		3
Current loan burden		4
Purchase price of the property		5

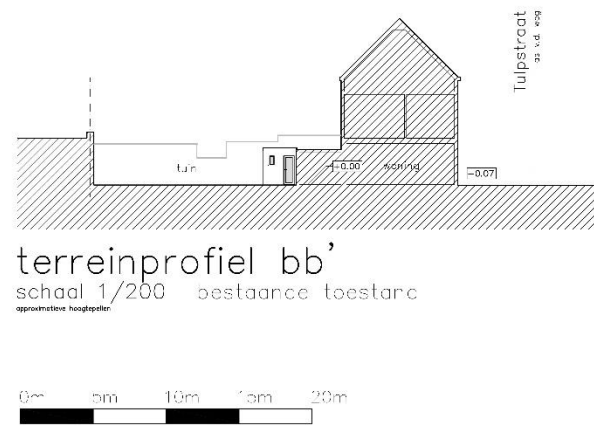
Current family composition		8
Activation		5
Educational attainment		6
Debt counselling		3
Health		8
Bonding with the city of Ghent		2.5
Bond with the home		2.5
TOTAL		60

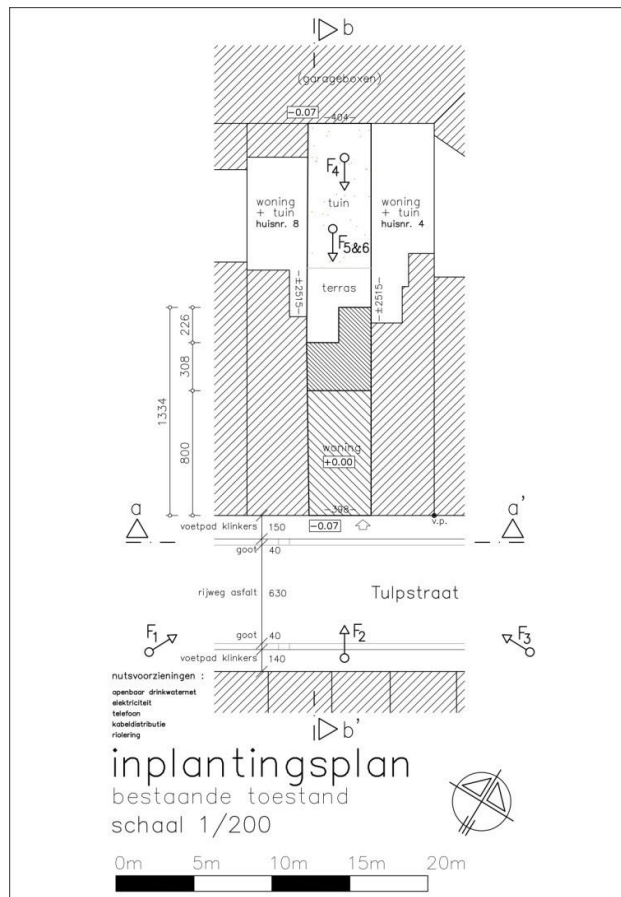
RESEARCH OF THE HOUSE	Score	Maximum score
Score Flemish Housing Code		12
CO hazard and heating		5
Electrocution or fire hazard		5
Moisture / roofs		5
Glass in the living room		5
Roof insulation		5
Budget meter		3
TOTAL		40

TOTAL	Score	Maximum score
		100
Assessment question	Yes/ No*	

Table 5: Personal data scoring table

e. Individual renovation plan: As soon as the beneficiary is selected and notified, a detailed individual renovation plan is created by the technical supervisors after a site visit and discussions with the selected homeowner. Together they discuss the results of the technical criteria and personal renovation wishes along the guidelines of the Flemish Housing code. The first priority is to eliminate any major health and safety risks. The list of works is re-submitted and discussed, and a final renovation plan is created. This also includes the cost of all works. Individual renovation plans showed that most common renovation works are electricity upgrades (80% of project homes), roof replacements (80% of project homes), and heating systems (60% of project homes). The final renovation plan is included in the final agreement.





4 Signing the agreement – Terms and Conditions

Gent Knapt Op is not a straightforward renovation scheme (which already is challenging enough) or a public subsidy support programme. Rather it is a project in which social criteria and house condition criteria are intertwined together. Candidates throughout the project become active partners as they take charge of the renovation process. In this case, the beneficiary and the city become financial partners as the city awards €30,000 to the renovation plan and becomes a co-owner of the house.

After the beneficiary has been selected and is ready to sign the agreement with the Public Centre of Social Welfare of Ghent (OCMW), they are awarded €30,000 to renovate their home and are ready to move to the next phase of construction. OCMW is part of the whole process of regulating and overseeing payments and construction as the awarded €30,000 the money isn't handed over to the participants directly but through an invoicing method of each subcontractor.

The Gent Knapt Op project is based on the innovative idea that the money given for the renovation – €30,000 – is repaid into the City of Ghent **Recurring Fund** so that in the future it can be used to invest again in renovating homes. The future and sustainability of the housing scheme is in the subsidy retention of the recurring fund.

a. Terms and conditions of the project:

- **Duration:** The renovation money must be paid back when the property is sold, let or sublet, donated or granting of any other change of the ownership. The moment the beneficiary leaves the property or transfers the ownership in any way, they must notify OCMW. The agreement between the beneficiary and the OCMW will be immediately terminated and the amount of 30,000 euros must be paid back.

- **Interest:** The renovation money is interest-free.
- **Payment:** OCMW Ghent pays each subcontractor that is executing the works directly. The invoice is in the beneficiary's name, and that is submitted to OCMW for payment. OCMW Ghent reserves the right to have the state of the works checked prior to each payment of an invoice.
- **Reimbursement:** The intervention must be repaid immediately (and in the same currency in which it was obtained) at the time the property is disposed of.
- **Added value:** If a surplus value has been generated on the property and land at the time of disposal through the use of the intervention, this surplus value will be distributed fairly between the user and OCMW Ghent. This is determined by the chartered valuer and calculated using an added value formula.
- **Insurance:** The beneficiary needs to take on an insurance policy against fire and other associated risks and must pay the premiums of this insurance on time as long as the renovation value is not fully repaid.
- **Offers:** The user is obliged to have at least 2 quotes made by approved contractors for the work to be carried out.
- **Permits:** The beneficiary declares that he / she has all legally required permits for the property in which the renovation work will be carried out.

5 Conclusion

The selection process used by the Gent Knapt Op was detailed in order to ensure that the project targeted the most appropriate participants. Because the project used both social and technical criteria, participants who received the construction funds needed it on two fronts: because they are in a socially vulnerable position and also because their homes were in need of renovation.

Gent Knapt Op relies on engagement with partners to provide input, including technical expertise about the requirements of housing in Ghent, and also the social skills to work directly with families and build trust in the project.

Moving forward from these phases, Gent Knapt Op will begin construction works and the project will set up the process for follow up support with participants. More details on the process will be included in the next Zoom-in on Gent Knapt Op.



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Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) is an Initiative of the European Union that provides urban areas throughout Europe with resources to test new and unproven solutions to address urban challenges. Based on article 8 of ERDF, the Initiative has a total ERDF budget of EUR 372 million for 2014-2020.

UIA projects will produce a wealth of knowledge stemming from the implementation of the innovative solutions for sustainable urban development that are of interest for city practitioners and stakeholders across the EU. This Zoom-in, written by a UIA Expert, captures and disseminates the lessons learnt from the project implementation and the good practices identified. It is part of the capitalisation and dissemination activities of the UIA – Urban Innovative Actions Initiative.