RESIDENTS INVOLVEMENT AND CO- OPERATIVE HOUSING

REPORT FROM BRIMINGHAM, TOPIC GROUP SOCIAL DOMAIN AND INTGRATION

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EFL EUROPEAN FEDERATION FOR LIVING

TABLE OF CONTENT

The Topic Group Social Domain & Integration met on October 23 and 24 in Birmingham, UK. The group composed by 18 housing professionals from both the EFL and Eurhonet network included delegates from England, Ireland, Germany, France, Sweden, Denmark and Netherlands. The theme of this meeting was centred around forms of inclusive planning and new initiatives for cooperative and community led housing.

1.   PLANNING FOR REAL: EFFECTIVE APPROACH FOR RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

The first interactive session was provided by the organisation **'Planning for Real'** – Margareth Wilkinson – Head of the planning for real unit (www.planningforreal.org.uk). As expert in participatory planning, the planning of neighbourhood improvements with a strong say of the residents, she explained the basic values of the methodology.

The aim of 'Planning for Real': Giving local people a voice in the qualities of their neighbourhood. To provide planning tools for participation, by a visual way, as easy as possible. People tend to be visual, so the more clear a visual presentation of problems is, the better people understand and are able to contribute in offering solutions. 'Planning for Real' works for local councils, local agencies and housing associations in the UK.

What changes can be reached in a neighbourhood? What has the organisation learned in working with residents?:

a. openness and honesty are key, explain to residents why are the changes needed, be part of the process, and if professionals stakeholders break a promise, it directly results in loss of trust.

b. use easy language, have clear goals, provide accessible ways to participate. Residents want to be listened to, they know the issues. Better then the pro's.

Planning for real's history derives from the seventies. During that time and after, the practice was to organise public meetings with professionals and residents. Professionals informed the local people what was going to happen. Not real discussing together; only the voices of angry people were heart or articulate people. The silent people in the meeting room were unheard. Therefore a new method was necessary to involve residents.

A better methodology was developed: showing the actual situation of the neighbourhood to people. The challenge: How to turn into reality; taking residents with you into the decision taking process.

■ **Communities and Neighbourhoods. Lessons for successful participatory planning:**
• Emphasis on engaging communities to give them a voice and influence
• Working at different levels: regional, district, parish, neighbourhood
• Working at a neighbourhood level is easier than at a regional level
• It takes more effort to involve people in issues more removed from their everyday lives
• Starting the engagement process early enough

■ **What do Communities want ...**
• Openness and honesty
• Early involvement
• Clear understandable information (jargon free) to aid informed choices / decisions
• Accessible ways of participating
• To be listened to and their views to be respected
• See something happen as a result
• Showing / doing not just talking
• Developing a Plan of Action – making things happen

1. PLANNING FOR REAL: EFFECTIVE APPROACH FOR RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

The way *'Planning for Real'* operates with both residents and professionals (for example the municipality or housing associations), is mainly focussed on use of scale models (3D map) of neighbourhoods. During public meetings, residents get the opportunity to indicate on a visual way what the problems are, at what location and which ideas could help solving the problem. Residents indicate the problems by using sticking cards on which they note the problem and place them on the 3 D map. The used steps within the planning process include:

1) Making of a 3D model of the neighbourhood. Often children make the 3D models of the buildings
2) Consulting residents in an interactive process: people around the 3D model on which they indicate the problem
3) Identifying of priorities
4) Action planning

■ Why is the method successful?
- It's not a public meeting (when only the outspoken people engage)
- Engages all ages – young and old
- Models and visuals more easily understood than a plan
- Using pre written and blank "flags" means everyone gets a "say"
- Mobile – can be taken to where local people are – indoors and outdoors
- Opportunity to test different options
- Informal conversations

■ Some of the potential benefits ...
- Increased confidence and commitment amongst residents
- Overcomes negativity
- Bridges the "Us" and "Them" divide
- Nurtures a more active community
- Solutions match need more closely
- Improved quality of life

The process Planning for Real:
Creation of **local ownership** is the goal. For each project its needed to compose a group. **Key for success: visual display of the neighbourhood.**

The residents make their own model of the neighbourhood. Often made by children. Looking at all aspects of life. The participants use small 'cards' of different colours. A colour is a theme: red: traffic and transport; - orange: crime and safety, etc.

After all ideas have been harvested, the next phase: prioritisation. The aims and necessities are ranked in three scales: high, medium, low importance. Solutions from the groupwork are bundeld also in time line: -a) quick and easy, b) going to take longer, c) longer term.

Next phase: **ACTION PLAN**. We (residents) can do it alone (1), we need partnerships (2), we can't do it, but outside partner is needed (3) only external partner can do it.
➡ community action.

The Planning for Real method is currently also used internationally. With a EU subsidy from the Leonardo funds for lifelong learning: a project with partners from UK, Italy, Turkey, Poland and France. Each country had its own pilot site. Material were trialled, everything has been translated. Even New Zealand showed interest.
More info: http://planning4real.eu/

2. HOUSING ASSOCIATION ACCORD PRINCIPLES FOR TENANT ENGAGEMENT

Housing Association Accord used the methodology effectively in different regeneration projects. One of them was the Clent Way Estate Regeneration Project in Birmingham. A housing estate from the seventies. This became a regeneration project. Accord used the 'Planning for Real' methodology which turned out in very high resident involvement. Solutions were found for example in the field of heating system, car parking and many other issues which needed to be solved. A full plan has been made to improve the area; now they are up to realize the regeneration beginning 2019.

■ How Accord Housing Association works with residents ?

- Local "patch" working – teams of experienced housing colleagues active in the community where they work
- Listening to concerns of residents and facing the issues
- Working with residents to shape solutions
- Community Development Team that can support colleagues & work directly in communities
- Planning for Real Unit as an extra resource

■ What are the needed ingredients by Accord?

- Finding the "leading lights" in the community – not always the talkers but the **doers**
- Capacity to support residents to engage & be involved
- Resources to deliver against needs
- Partnership working from the outset to deliver residents needs you can't
- Commitment to ongoing support and involvement

Best Practice: for example Wolverhampton: completely new community centres have been realized with engagement of the local community.

3. COMMUNITY LED HOUSING MODELS & SELF HELP HOUSING

Carl Taylor, assistant director new business and growth Accord Group and David Mullins of the University of Birmingham introduced concepts of community led housing provision. The trend to cooperate with current and future residents for housing solutions is growing rapidly in Europe.

But what is collaborative housing? **Basically: Self help + external support = Collaborative Housing**. This is an European trend: growth of self- organised housing.

There is a variety of drivers for collaborative housing, not just the global crisis in 2008:
• building on earlier legacies of cooperatives (like in Germany)
• seeking alternatives to big housing, = seeking affordability in perpetuity
• promoting collective living
• community control and community benefit

The UK embraced the 'new' way of thinking by the re-emergence of the **Community Housing Fund 2016-2020 (initiated by Minister of Finance George Osborn)**. Public money is used to support initiatives of collaborative housing.

It clearly responded to civil society trends and campaigns. Second homes prevented younger people to acquire a home, so in these regions the Fund is used. Building capacity on local level was key for Osborn. A total budget of 60 million pounds was available for area's with a large number of second homes. And for the final two years of the program 2018 -2020: 163 Million pounds are available. The fund can be use:
• community capacity building
• spending on professional fees for consultancy
• infrastructure

Capital funding was announced in September 2018: channel the funds to registered housing providers for social rent or shared ownership. Support for group led, community organisations.

Why public support is effective or necessary?

State perspective:
• leverage more resources
• broadening range of housing providers
• increasing supply
• enhance affordability
• community building
• wider community benefits

Community perspective:
• trading independence for resources
• funding early stage
• scaling
• doing more with less

Kind of support provided within the program:
• overall policy and strategy to influence others (eg developers)
• planning and land
• finance: subsidies, loans, guarantees
• crowd funding
• asset transfers
• skills and knowledge
• legitimacy

Housing Solutions: Affordable and accessible — Secure communities — Empty Homes — Safer Neighbourhoods — Benefits to Owners — Active participation Building confidence — Community Based Social Enterprise — Construction Skills & Qualifications — Employment & Training

Mullins D (2010) Self-Help Housing
https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/social-policy/departments/social-policy-sociology-criminology/research/projects/2015/empty-homes-community-grants.aspx

4. INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES/ BEST PRACTICES OF COMMUNITY LED DEVELOPMENT

1) Barcelona/ Catalonia:

Barcelona City is providing land to cooperatives through 75-year leaseholds (dret de superfície) at peppercorn rents to housing cooperatives. There is a strong political support for civil society groups in response to housing crisis, evictions and urban renewal, rising rents, empty homes and small public housing programme. So the provision of these leaseholds is one plank of a much wider Right to Housing Plan. The key conditions are requirement to provide affordable housing (as defined in the law), engage with communities and provide public spaces. Private finance is needed and is partly also provided, mainly by ethical banking, as well as by the cooperative members (private persons) themselves. Furthermore we see a process of community capacity building by intermediaries (Sostra Civic & La Dinamo). The city currently has 2 pilot projects, La Borda and Carrer Princesa, and 7 further sites with a total 149 homes. It's clear that this is only a drop in the ocean, but at the other hand it's a hopeful sign which grows on the wings of engaged residents.

2) Austria/ Vienna: Developer Competition

The municipality assembles large development sites and allocates land via developer competitions. The city has set a list of requirements for the tendering process, including social and environmental criteria alongside issues of value for money & design. Developers need to consider community building in their planning proposals, take care of a social mixing and tenant participation. The city decides and stimulates capacity building for resident groups provided by successful bidders. The land is finally allocated to co-housing projects and large cooperatives who build in participation of new residents. Two successful sites in Vienna – Seestadt Aspern and Sonnwendviertel.

3) Wales: Cooperative Housing Programme

In 2012 the Welsh Government commitment to co-operative housing: Policy Framework and Public Funding (refreshed 2016) . The Government Agreed a Target for % of public housing programme funding to go to new build co-operatives. This resulted in 25 schemes in development; 4 completed; 3 nearing completion. Delivery via Housing Associations & local authorities. Specialist support from WCC and CCH is provides, added with ongoing Welsh Government Ministerial and officer support.

4) Netherlands

Public support for collaborative projects through planning system and plot allocation. The local authorities are active in allocating of plots to self-builders and co-housing projects in Almere & Amsterdam. The new Housing Act 2015 restores cooperative form to Dutch housing on paper, although the market takes this up very slowly. Resident co-operatives for collective ownership being explored with Housing Providers in Amsterdam. Another form of 'co housing' is provided by the Dutch housing association De Key. They provided since 2017 so called self-managed modular housing for young Dutch people (students and others) and also open for refugees or so called statusholders. The project is called Startblok, referring to the start of a living career in Amsterdam. It is also supported by Amsterdam City council and De Key Housing Association.

Startblok Riekerhaven, Amsterdam.

4. INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES/ BEST PRACTICES OF COMMUNITY LED DEVELOPMENT

5) France

The 'Habitat participatif' concept emerged in early 2000s. It received the Green Party support after 2012. The so called ALUR law on housing and urbanism (2014) defined it as "citizen initiatives to participate to the definition and conception of their housing and its shared spaces, to build and to manage it". Rough estimates of 400 self-organized citizen initiatives as result of this new law. There are two main forms – Collective self provision (1) and Resident cooperatives Public Authorities (2). They began to support with access to land.

The role of the local authorities included: Land opportunities (mostly through competitions), planning permission, local subsidies (discounts). The Housing Providers were provided with some financial backing and experiments with housing management and engagement intermediaries. Some conflicts between housing providers and grass roots groups have been taken place.

6) England

ENGLAND: Redditch Co-operative Homes

- Partnership between Accord Group and Redditch Borough Council
- Financed and developed through Accord (which retains freehold)
- Long lease to intermediary (RCH)
- Shorter leases to local management co-operatives

5. REDDITCH SITE VISIT- CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING BEST PRACTICE

One of the estates Accord Housing owns, Marlfield, is formerly slum clearance program. On that site, Accord Housing started with the development of the co-operative model for new construction after the slums have been cleared.

Redditch is a commuter city with about 85.000 inhabitants, about 25 km southwest of Birmingham. Redditch, a former new town in the West Midlands. Within commuting distance of Birmingham, with access to local rural areas but with a comparatively young population, Redditch combines areas of affluence with pockets of deprivation and unemployment.
Accord Housing, a Black Country based housing association with a subsidiary partner - Birmingham Co-operative Housing Services – which provides services to West Midlands housing co-operatives – was the obvious partner chosen by Redditch Council. They could bring the Council their development expertise and their financing capacity alongside the skills and knowledge to develop co-operative housing groups from BCHS.

Since then, five local neighbourhood housing co-operatives have been developed in Redditch managing nearly 500 homes between them. Initially benefitting from competitively priced local authority land, developing the co-ops demonstrated that it was possible to develop community-led housing where there was no pre-existing interest or knowledge of co-operative housing in the local population. With all member residents nominated to their homes by the Council, initially half were pre-allocated to enable development of the co-operative housing groups during the scheme development period, supported by Accord through BCHS, an approach replicated when further new schemes have been initiated. This meant that the fledgling co-ops

were able to input into scheme design and to customise individual homes. Once the co-ops have been initially established, the Council uses a more conventional approach to its nominations to the co-op. The co-ops have recurring 7 year leases with Accord, enabling them to issue tenancies to their member tenants, and the co-ops have management arrangements with Accord to provide services to them through a local office set up in the borough. Initially all of the co-ops rented, but the flexibility of the model has subsequently enabled the development of some shared ownership homes in some co-ops. With more than half of the members involved in each of the co-ops, the Redditch approach has generated considerable benefits. Service provision statistics compare favourably against local benchmarks, and satisfaction statistics are high (an average of 93.5%). However, more importantly, the Redditch co-ops have been about developing mutually supportive local communities, particularly in Breedon Co-op, established two schemes for the over 60s. Co-operative, mutual self-help in the co-operative has enabled older people to stay independent for longer, while in the family housing mutual self-help provides support to victims of domestic violence. By creating co-operative communities, structures are put in place that enable people to offer mutual support, relieving the pressure on the state for some service provision.

For the younger residents, the Redditch co-ops have enabled several to build their skills and confidence, with several younger members getting into work as a result of their co-op membership. **The co-ops has also led to house build factory insulative materials, resulting in** energy costs 50% cheaper than traditional housing, and solar panels reducing service charges. Speaking about the most recent 79 home development in the Marlfield area of Redditch, Ian Clements, Riverside Housing Co-op said its great that they get to control how our housing works, but actually Marlfield is more about our local community – we have developed our own Facebook Group – which covers everything from lost clothes and parcels to bigger questions about our homes. We run a local holiday club and we hold big parties on our estates.

Forms of housing in Redditch:
- Affordable housing: 80% of the market rent
- Social rent: a formula to calculate the rent- depend on various factors
- Shared ownership: buyer buys 50% of the house. Asset share

One of the disadvantages of cooperative housing: needs an agreement with the city, not enough subsidy. From a strategic point of view its quite interesting for housing associations to create housing cooperatives: **there is no right to buy, so they keep the homes and don't have to sell for big discounts'.**

For the **local economy it's also good:** most repairs go to local contractors; recycling the pound in the local community.

The Co-operative Advantage
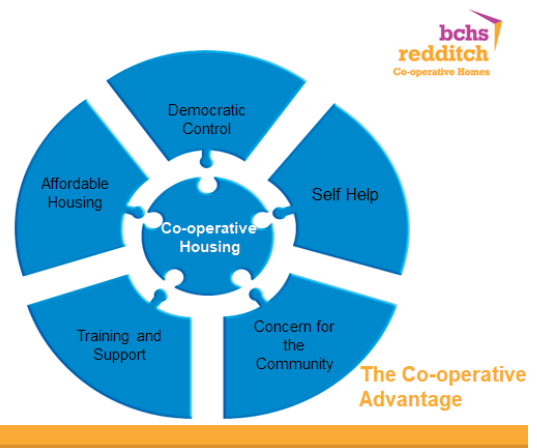
Arguments for Co-operative Housing

Empowering people

Skills training Employment

Meeting Community Needs

High Quality Affordable Housing

Sustainable Neighbourhoods Community Enterprise

6. MEASURING AND EVIDENCING SOCIAL IMPACT

Social value is the quantification of the relative importance that people place on the changes they experiences in their lives. Some, but not all of this value is captured in market prices. Best practice from Birmingham, the national organisation 'Social Value. (http://www.socialvalueuk.org)

The idea is that investing in social impact pays out. Also in terms of saving costs for security, police, reduced transfer incomes.
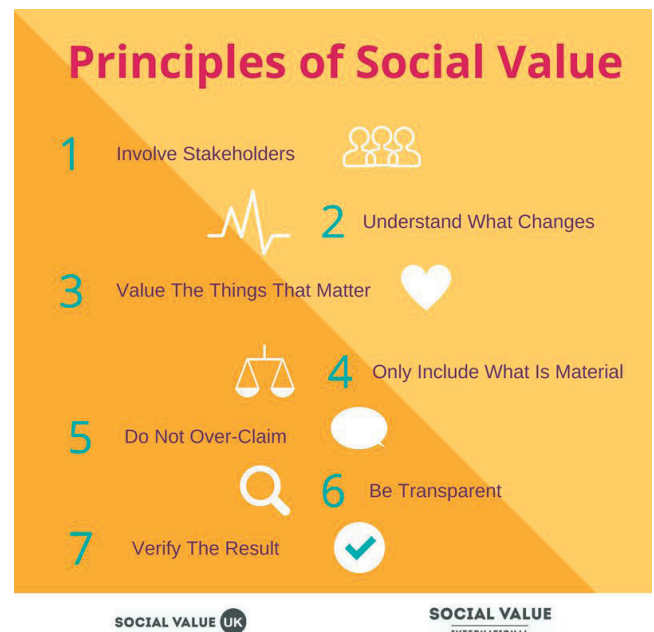
- Consider social value as part of a **procurement** process. We will work with our contractor partners to deliver social value while they deliver the main element of their contracts
- Support **local economies** in the areas we work through focusing on local employment, buying locally and building local partnerships
- Commit to protecting our local **environment** through minimising waste and energy consumption and using resources efficiently
- **Involve our customers** to find out what they think and what matters to them
- **Measure the impact** of our activities so we understand how much social value we are creating. This will help us take informed decisions to try and make even more of a difference

Applying these principles will help us create a more consistent and credible account for the social value that is being created.

- Engage with stakeholders to develop a Theory of Change describing the change an organisation wants to make and the steps needed to make it happen
- Define how we will know whether and to what extent the outcomes have been achieved
- Set up processes to capture the appropriate data at the start

Areas of social value:

- Procurement
- Local Employment
- Meeting local & specialist need
- Low carbon housing
- Loneliness
- Volunteering and skills
- Community Investment
- Hate crime reporting
- Safeguarding and local partnership

Principles of Social Value

1 Involve Stakeholders

2 Understand What Changes

3 Value The Things That Matter

4 Only Include What Is Material

5 Do Not Over-Claim

6 Be Transparent

7 Verify The Result

SOCIAL VALUE UK

SOCIAL VALUE INTERNATIONAL

7. EXAMPLE OF SOCIAL VALUE: HOLIDAY KITCHEN FOR UNPRIVILEGED FAMILIES

With the support of Children in Need, Accord Housing has developed and delivered holiday kitchen food and enrichment activities since 2013. Following a neighbourhood consultation in Bordesley Green, Holiday Kitchen started by supporting ten other holiday activity providers with packed lunches.

Year on year the programme has grown and developed into a quality assured and evidence based wellbeing and life-skills activities programme based on family learning principles and the NEF Five Ways to Wellbeing. During this time we have developed close working partnerships with a range of community and strategic organisations including Birmingham City University as evaluators and for the last three years have benefited from Fareshare food. Public Health England have also supported us share best practice and promoted the programme nationally through the LGA as an exemplar of asset based community development regarding health and wellbeing promotion and early help.

More background

The programme is structured around daily family learning themes aligned to Educational Endowerment Fund Teaching and Learning Toolkit topic areas and cover:
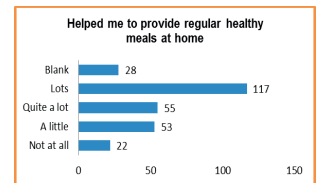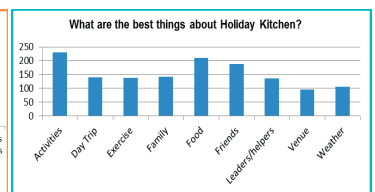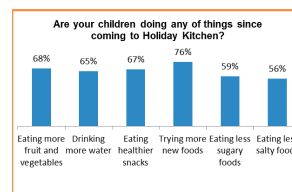
• Adventure stories, drama and craft
• Change for life – get active day
• Money fun and games
• Field to fork
• Local day trip
• Make and taste
• Cooking
• Forest school fun
• Music
• Dance and celebration

The programme encourages parental involvement in learning and supporting their confidence to do so beyond the programme.
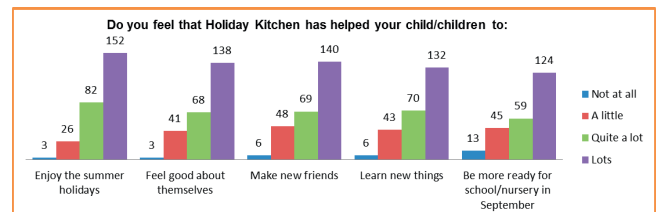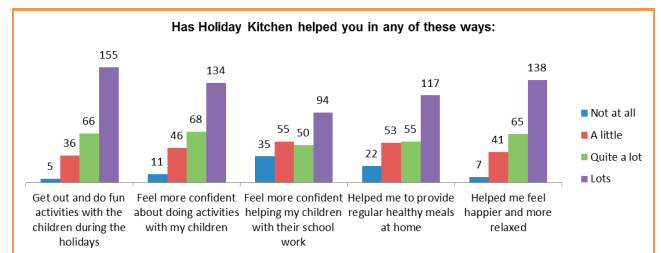
The evidence / proof of result:

Impact & Outcomes

Are your children doing any of things since coming to Holiday Kitchen?

Eating more fruit and vegetables	Drinking more water	Eating healthier snacks	Trying more new foods	Eating less sugary foods	Eating less salty foods
68%	65%	67%	76%	59%	56%

What are the best things about Holiday Kitchen? (Activities, Day Trip, Exercise, Family, Food, Friends, Leaders/helpers, Venue, Weather)

How has Holiday Kitchen helped you and your family?

Other	27
Be physically active	160
Get outside	192
Meet new people	225
Eat together	195
Improve social skills	185
Do family activities	222
Save money	136
Learn to cook	123

Helped me to provide regular healthy meals at home

Blank	28
Lots	117
Quite a lot	55
A little	53
Not at all	22

Outcomes

Has Holiday Kitchen helped you in any of these ways:

	Not at all	A little	Quite a lot	Lots
Get out and do fun activities with the children during the holidays	5	36	66	155
Feel more confident about doing activities with my children	11	46	68	134
Feel more confident helping my children with their school work	35	55	50	94
Helped me to provide regular healthy meals at home	22	53	55	117
Helped me feel happier and more relaxed	7	41	65	138

Do you feel that Holiday Kitchen has helped your child/children to:

	Not at all	A little	Quite a lot	Lots
Enjoy the summer holidays	3	26	82	152
Feel good about themselves	3	41	68	138
Make new friends	6	48	69	140
Learn new things	6	43	70	132
Be more ready for school/nursery in September	13	45	59	124

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

1	Natalie Jones	MATRIX	UK
2	Carl Taylor	MATRIX	UK
3	Margaret Wilkinson MBE	Planning for Real	UK
4	Caroline Wolhuter	MATRIX	UK
5	Sian Every	MATRIX	UK
6	Peter Helly	MATRIX	UK
7	Julie Xavier	VILOGIA SA.	F
8	Dr. Klemens Deinzer	Joseph Stiftung EXECUTIVE BOARD	D
9	Ulrike Hanna	Joseph Stiftung Consultant for living and social affairs	D
10	Rotraud Degenhardt	GWG München	D
11	Professor David Mullins	Birmingham University	UK
12	Maite Arrondo	Barcelona Council	ES
13	Elke Heidrich	Eigen Haard	NL
14	Joost Nieuwenhuijzen	EFL	NL
15	Katja Sievert	Dogewo 21	D
16	Kathleen Cottier	Cluid	IRL
17	Joe Gallop	Cluid	IRL
18	Trine Sander	BO-VEST	DK
19	Amanda Hogenes	Parteon	NL
20	Sylvia van Heuven	Parteon	NL
21	Helene Blomberg	HFAB	S
22	Dragana Curovic	AB Helsingborgshem	S

Text and pictures: Joost Nieuwenhuijzen / European Federation for Living 2018.