

## **Virtual meeting with the FEANTSA member Saint John of God-Social Services, to know the new centre La Llabor (Barcelona)**

Saint John of God-Social Services (SJD) offers housing solutions for homeless people in two different forms: shelters and apartments run using Housing First methodology. Regarding the shelters, they manage three, comprised of individual rooms and common areas, and their work approach is case-by-case, promoting self-management while offering a supportive environment. The shelters are meant to be temporary (around 6 months), but the stay can be extended by as much as the person needs. In order to leave, the organisation ensures that the user moves to at least one of the accommodation options placed in the upper categories of ETHOS typology.

In the last 12 years, the organisation has seen more heterogeneous profiles in users, and has tried to tackle their varying needs. The opening of the centre La Llabor is the last example of this effort to address the needs of specific segments of the homeless population, since it is designed to host women only. The centre, opened in October 2020, is one of the 3 shelters managed by SJD. It was possible through a close partnership between Saint John of God and the city council of Barcelona. After 13 years working together with local authorities to offer differentiated services for a heterogeneous homeless population, including women who experience homelessness, SJD and the city council accomplished this goal.

“One person can find a job in two weeks, we’ve seen this happen before. But another can take up to 3 years or more, and the authorities understood that it’s difficult and different from case to case, including for people who have an irregular administrative status.”, tells us Javi Prieto, vice-director of Saint John of God-Social Services.

The funding contract with the city council for the centre La Llabor is for at least 4 years. Although its duration is not linked to the needs of women with irregular administrative status, it coincidentally benefits them because applications for a residence permit or asylum can take up to 3 years in Spain. The stability of the funding contract gives enough time to support these women, and to ensure that their administrative status is not an obstacle to exit situations of homelessness, exclusion and/or abuse. Currently, it is the city council, together with the managers of La Llabor, who decide which women are hosted in the centre.

The centre has the capacity to host up to 40 women, and it currently hosts 36, who are 43 years old on average. Some of them face problems such as addictions, for which they receive treatment. Some of the rooms can host minors and their mothers, by having two connected bedrooms for example, but currently there are no requests to host minors in the shelter. In the case that this situation arises, the staff is confident that the accommodation of minors with their mother will be possible. Out of the 36 women who are hosted in the centre at the moment, 80% of them have a migrant background, of which 40% have an irregular administrative status, mostly due to delays in renewing their residence permits. Since a few years ago, the number of migrant people supported overall by Saint John of God-Social Services is bigger than those of Spanish nationality, especially from non-EU countries, who account for 60% of the migrant population supported by SJD.

12 professionals work currently in the centre, and a psychologist and a legal counselling service are expected to be hired in the future as well. All of the users have 2 professionals to contact if they need to - one during the day and the other one for the evenings and nights, so attention can be given 24 hours. All of the professionals are women, since it would be easier to approach the hosts given the link between

women in homelessness and gender-based violence. Also, some of the professionals working at La Llabor have a migrant background too, which makes it easier to overcome potential cultural or language barriers.

“The principle of autonomy is very present at the centre La Llabor, participation and autonomy are very important, and women enjoy privacy and a safe space. Everything is coordinated and planned, but with total freedom for the women.” - Charo Sillero, director of the centre La Llabor.

The autonomy of the users themselves is a key principle of this new centre. That is the reason why the facility comprises 33 individual apartments and another accommodation for 7 women, adapting services to individual needs as well. Half of the rooms have their own bathroom, and the rest of the women use common bathrooms. All of them are in charge of daily maintenance of their rooms, there is no laundry service and each user has the key for her room, while the door to enter the building remains always open. There is a catering service which provides daily meals, but if some women cannot have their meals at the centre for work or educational reasons, they are given some pocket money. There is a weekly cleaning service to do a deeper cleaning of the common areas and the rooms, too. Both the cleaning and catering services are provided by social companies which hire people at risk of social exclusion. The rest of the needs, such as medicines or food, are covered by local shops, which increases the synergies between the centre and its surrounding area and makes the inclusion of the women of La Llabor in the fabric of the surrounding community easier.

All users have their own workplan and are assisted in both education and job skills by ARED Foundation. A close collaboration between ARED and La Llabor makes easier the improvement of work-related capacities among the hosted women. Apart from ARED, La Llabor has established partnerships with other NGOs and local authorities, in order to provide different services that meet each woman's needs.

La Llabor is one of the first housing centres funded by Barcelona city council and under its direct responsibility which has allowed access for migrants with irregular administrative status. Although it was not planned specifically for women in this situation, many women at La Llabor fit this profile due to the high prevalence of exclusion and homelessness among these migrants. To better address the needs of these women, La Llabor collaborates with other organisations such as Red Cross, Caritas and SAIER, the service in Barcelona which coordinates support to migrants and refugees. If this pilot project is successful, the city council, who is the main donor of the project, plans to replicate it with other centres.

**The meeting was held on the 26<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

For more information, you can visit:

<https://www.sjdservissocials-bcn.org/ca/noticia/neix-llavor-acompanyar-dones-situacio-sensellarisme-millorar-les-seves-vides>

[https://www.barcelona.cat/infobarcelona/en/la-llavor-the-first-centre-exclusively-for-homeless-women\\_996826.html](https://www.barcelona.cat/infobarcelona/en/la-llavor-the-first-centre-exclusively-for-homeless-women_996826.html)