

Lokaal Signaal
Digital tool for frontline workers.

<u>Organisation(s):</u>	The Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) Local governments: Bornem, Dendermonde, Eeklo, Ghent, Kortrijk, Mortsel, Oud-Turnhout, Roeselare and Sint-Niklaas VIVEL & Eerstelijnszone Ghent	
<u>Country:</u>	Belgium	
<u>Contact:</u>	policy@esn-eu.org (we will function as an intermediary between you and interested organisations who want to learn more about the practice)	
<u>Theme:</u> <i>Choose at least one option</i>	☐ Ageing & Care ☐ Asylum & Migration ☐ Young People ☐ Support for Children & Families ☐ Community Care ☐ Integrated Care & Support ☐ Co-Production ☐ Disability ☐ Housing & Homelessness ☒ Artificial Intelligence ☒ Digitalisation ☐ Quality Care	☐ Labour Market Inclusion ☒ Social Inclusion ☒ Technology ☒ Workforce and Leadership ☐ Social Benefits ☐ EU Funding ☒ Social Services' Resilience ☐ Mental Health ☐ Person-Centred Care ☒ Research & Use of Evidence ☒ Management & Planning ☐ Other, please specify:
<u>Principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights:</u> <i>Which principles does your practice cover? Check the 20 principles here.</i>	☐ 1. Education, training, life-long learning ☐ 2. Gender equality ☐ 3. Equal opportunities ☐ 4. Active support to employment ☐ 5. Secure and adaptable employment ☐ 6. Fair Wages ☐ 7. Transparent employment conditions ☐ 8. Social dialogue ☐ 9. Work-life balance ☐ 10. Healthy, safe work environment	☒ 11. Childcare and child support ☒ 12. Social protection ☐ 13. Unemployment benefits ☐ 14. Minimum income ☐ 15. Old age income and pensions ☐ 16. Health care ☒ 17. Inclusion of people with disabilities ☒ 18. Long-term care ☒ 19. Housing and assistance to homeless ☒ 20. Access to essential services
<u>Current status of the practice:</u>	☐ Concept and Design Phase ☐ Testing or pilot phase ☐ Temporary practice that has terminated ☐ Temporary practice that is ongoing and has a termination date ☒ Established and ongoing practice ☒ Scaling Up and Transformation Phase ☒ Other (please specify):	
<u>Summary:</u>	Despite their proximity to communities, social service managers and local policy decision makers often lack systematic, actionable input from frontline social care workers, making it difficult to respond effectively to complex societal issues. Lokaal Signaal connects the needs of vulnerable citizens with local social policies through a co-created digital tool and an inclusive process. Frontline professionals such as social workers, teachers and home nurses act as "societal sensors," identifying	

	recurring structural issues that transcend individual cases. These signals are aggregated and prioritised to become actionable insights for local governments. The project has developed a Minimal Viable Product (MVP), ensuring a functional prototype for immediate use. Future iterations will include enhanced analytics and artificial intelligence to improve signal processing and integrate insights at multiple governance levels.
<u>Context/ Social issues addressed</u> <i>Please explain the problem you attempt to solve with your practice.</i>	The project improves social planning, and addresses the challenges faced by local governments in their role as directors of social policy. Despite their proximity to communities, they often lack systematic, actionable input from frontline workers, making it difficult to respond effectively to complex societal issues. Lokaal Signaal ensures: 1. Signals from the field directly inform policies. 2. Structural barriers affecting vulnerable citizens are systematically tackled. Cooperation between local and supra-local governments becomes more impactful, aligning with the Flemish Local Social Policy Decree.
<u>Objectives:</u> <i>Please provide a maximum of three objectives in bullet points.</i>	1. Turn frontline signals into structural policy action Lokaal Signaal systematically collects and aggregates signals from first-line professionals (e.g. social workers, teachers, nurses) to identify recurring social problems and inform local and supra-local policy action 2. Strengthen responsive and inclusive local governance The project builds trust and collaboration between citizens, frontline workers and local authorities, enabling faster detection of societal issues and co-creation of solutions 3. Create a scalable digital and governance infrastructure It combines a user-friendly digital tool with AI-supported analysis and a clear governance model, allowing municipalities of all sizes to implement and expand the system sustainably.
<u>Activities:</u> <i>Please describe the activities put in place to achieve the objectives (maximum 400 words).</i>	To achieve its objectives, Lokaal Signaal combines technological innovation with structured governance and collaborative processes. The project operates along four main activity lines, which will be further developed and scaled up in the coming years, linked to a potential new funding application to the Flemish government. 1. Developing and Optimising the Digital Tool A low-threshold digital platform allows frontline professionals (e.g. social workers, teachers, GPs, volunteers) to submit signals easily and securely. AI functionalities support classification, trend detection and data quality checks, while dashboards give local policymakers faster insights. Integration with Flemish standards (OSLO and VLOCA) ensures interoperability and scalability across municipalities. In the next phase, the tool will also be expanded towards supra-local and central governments and partner organisations, enabling multi-level governance and better alignment between local signals and higher-level policy development 2. Collaborative Analysis and Policy Translation Local signal processors analyse and prioritise signals with input from frontline workers. Through structured workshops and “signal days,” municipalities, social organisations and local officials co-create targeted actions. This participatory approach ensures grounded, structural policy responses to complex social issues 3. Building a Sustainable and Future-Proof Governance and Onboarding Framework At this stage, a basic governance model has been developed, clearly defining roles for municipalities, VVSG, VIVEL and other partners. In the coming years, this structure will be further developed into a future-proof governance framework, aligned with long-term policy objectives and institutional anchoring. This may include strategic partnerships with the Flemish government and other supra-local actors to ensure coherence and sustainability. New municipalities joining the system in the future will receive standardised onboarding materials, including playbooks, privacy agreements, communication kits and training resources. Steering groups, working groups and learning networks will continue to coordinate implementation and improvement

	4. Capacity Building, Monitoring and Feedback Loops Training and knowledge exchange sustain engagement and build capacity at the local level. Frontline professionals receive regular feedback on how their signals inform policy, which strengthens trust and motivation. In addition, systematic monitoring of processes will be further developed to assess how signals move through the system and result in concrete actions. Feedback loops are a core element to ensure that learning and adaptation are embedded in practice, and that insights are shared across municipalities and governance levels. In the next phase of the project, these activity lines will be expanded and refined, focusing on scaling, quality assurance and long-term embedding across more municipalities and higher governance levels. By linking this development to a new Flemish subsidy application, Lokaal Signaal aims to secure sustainable implementation and broad policy impact, strengthening the connection between practice and policy for years to come.
Outcomes: Please explain what the results were/are so far and how you evaluated this (i.e. statistics, a study, or feedback)	The results achieved so far mainly reflect the successful implementation of the MVP (Minimum Viable Product) of Lokaal Signaal and the first learnings from pilot municipalities. Since autumn 2025, nine municipalities have started working with the tool and process, supported by VVSG and partners such as VIVEL and Eerstelijnszone Gent. First implementation results • Broad engagement from the field: Pilot municipalities report enthusiastic participation of frontline professionals (e.g. social workers, teachers, health workers), who appreciate the intuitive and low-threshold tool. • Early signals collected: Municipalities have started logging and processing signals related to key social issues such as access to housing, health care, loneliness and poverty. • Growing intersectoral cooperation: The tool supports local teams in moving from fragmented reporting to joint analysis and problem-solving. • Motivation through feedback: Frontline professionals indicate they feel more recognised as “societal sensors” when receiving updates on how their signals are used, which boosts engagement Policy relevance and impact • In municipalities like Ghent, Oud-Turnhout and Kortrijk, early signals have already led to shorter communication lines between frontline actors and decision-makers, enabling more targeted local responses (e.g. accessible housing solutions, preventive dental care programmes) • The AI-supported clustering and tagging helps to identify patterns faster, laying the foundation for structural policy interventions at both the local and supra-local level. Evaluation methods used Evaluation is currently formative, focusing on learning and adaptation rather than impact measurement alone. Methods include: • User testing and focus groups with frontline workers, local policy officers and technical partners to assess usability, functionality and process fit. • Structured feedback sessions to track engagement and motivation levels of signal providers. • Early monitoring data, such as the number and type of signals submitted, user activity rates, and participation in signal days. Qualitative interviews with pilot municipalities to identify bottlenecks, good practices and opportunities for scaling, 4. Next steps

	In 2026, evaluation will shift towards quantifying impact on policy processes and service delivery. Following a potential further development phase with the technology partner, AI-driven dashboards and structured monitoring will be expanded to provide deeper insight into how signals are translated into concrete policy actions. This will include more systematic tracking of process indicators, such as: • the lead time between signal submission and follow-up action, • the number and diversity of signal providers, • and the depth and quality of information contained in the signals. These insights will not only strengthen local decision-making but also support supra-local learning, enabling more evidence-based and responsive policy development.
Funding Source	EU Funds: ESF+ ☐ INTERREG ☐ ERDF ☐ ERASMUS ☐ RRF ☐ other ☐ ☐ National Government Funds ☒ Regional Government Funds ☒ Local Government Funds ☒ Private Sponsorship / Public-Private Partnership ☐ Financial contribution of People using Services ☐ Other, please define:
Links	www.lokaalsignaal.be https://www.vvsg.be/projecten/lokaal-signaal
Comments and tips i.e. for people willing to implement your Practice in their service	Comments and Tips for Implementation 1. Currently active in Flanders – with the ambition to scale up <i>Lokaal Signaal</i> is currently implemented only in Flanders (Belgium). The ambition is to engage all Flemish local governments in the coming years. The practice will gladly be shared with interested partners, as the model is both structured and adaptable. 2. Many steps can be taken before using the tool itself Municipalities and organisations can already lay the groundwork locally before starting with the digital platform. This includes building strong local partnerships, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and establishing clear engagement agreements. These steps create a solid foundation and make the eventual implementation of the tool much smoother. 3. You can already collect signals with simple solutions Even before working with the <i>Lokaal Signaal</i> platform, municipalities can set up a simple Microsoft Forms (or similar) form to allow frontline workers and partner organisations to submit signals. This early step helps to familiarise people with the idea of structured signalling and strengthens trust and collaboration between the municipality and its partners. 4. Partnerships are the heart of the system <i>Lokaal Signaal</i> works best when municipalities collaborate closely with first-line organisations and social services. Involve frontline professionals early and position them not only as signal providers but also as partners in analysing problems and co-creating solutions. Strong collaboration structures are often in place before the tool goes live. 5. Invest early in governance and engagement Defining a lead signal processor, mapping key stakeholders, agreeing on data use and feedback, and making responsibilities transparent can all be done ahead of time. Municipalities that prepare well locally often implement the tool faster and with stronger ownership. 6. The tool builds on a participatory process, not the other way around The digital platform is a powerful instrument — but its impact depends on the process behind it. A clear local network, shared vision and established working method are the real drivers of change. Lokaal Signaal will gladly be shared with others Although currently limited to Flanders, the method is designed to be transferable.

	Municipalities outside the network can learn from the Flemish experience and adapt the process to their own governance structures and local context.
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