

Transition house Enghien - Belgium

Introduction



Transition house Enghien is a newly established facility located in Enghien (Edingen), in the French-speaking part of Belgium. Opened in 2024, this transition house is part of a national initiative that has already resulted in the creation of three other transition houses across Belgium, including locations in Mechelen, Gentbrugge, and Leuven. Notably, this is the first transition house in Wallonia.

Managed by ORS Serco, a private service provider with a focus on security for governments across Europe and worldwide, the house operates in collaboration with the municipality of Enghien and the prison administration. ORS Serco's vision emphasizes the importance of providing each resident with a warm, supportive environment where they can access personalized assistance. Recognizing that returning to a normal life can be a significant challenge, the transition house aims to support individuals at every stage of their reintegration journey, offering guidance from life coaches and power coaches.

Scale

Transition house Enghien has room for fifteen people. They all live together in one building.

RESCALED-principles in practice:

- Small-scale
- Differentiated
- Community-integrated

Differentiation

Target group:

The target group of Transition house Enghien are men serving long prison sentences who are eligible to stay at the transition house from 18 months before their parole. To be eligible, residents must be proficient in French and able to live in groups, as communal living is an important aspect of the programme. Contraindications include individuals who have committed sexual crimes or terrorism.

The selection of residents is done in consultation with local prison boards and the prisons' psychosocial services. Once a decision is made on placement in the transition house, a meeting is scheduled with the staff of the facility to discuss next steps and ensure a smooth transition. This careful selection process helps create a supportive environment conducive to rehabilitation and successful reintegration into society.

Forms of security:

Relational security at Transition house Enghien focuses on building supportive relationships between staff and residents to create a safe and nurturing environment. Staff members engage with residents during work and daily activities while also maintaining a separate workspace for administrative tasks. This approach fosters open communication and trust, which are essential for effective support. The team comprises six life coaches and three power coaches. The life coaches oversee the daily functioning of the home, promoting principles of responsibility, cooperation, and independence among residents. Meanwhile, the power coaches provide individualized assistance with administrative tasks, job searches, access to training, and connections to support services.



With 24/7 staffing, the facility ensures continuous supervision and tailored support, helping residents navigate their reintegration journey successfully. As the facility has only recently opened, it is still challenging to provide more details about relational security in practice.

Several static security measures have been implemented to enhance safety at Transition house Enghien. Surveillance cameras monitor communal areas throughout the building, while private rooms, showers, and toilets remain unmonitored to respect residents' privacy. Access to all areas, including entrances and exits are secured with locks, and residents do not have keys to these rooms. The windows in the private rooms are fixed and cannot be opened. Staff members wear blue shirts from the security company Serco, and each staff member is equipped with a walkie-talkie.

Procedural security at Transition house Enghien establishes clear guidelines to maintain a safe and structured environment for residents. From 9 p.m. to 7 a.m., residents must be in their rooms. During the day, they are free to move within the facility, but when leaving, they must scan their badges for supervision. While residents are generally expected to stay at the facility, they may leave for work or to access certain services. Each outing must be pre-approved, with strict regulations regarding the destination and time of return. Residents are entitled to one independent outing per year, which is tracked through a software

program, while other outings require staff supervision. Importantly, all outings must be validated, and residents are not permitted to go out after 8 p.m. They are also allowed to use their mobile phones.

Activities:

At Transition House Enghien, the supportive approach is structured around the “3 S’s”: health, safety and support. This framework focuses on nine key areas essential to successful reintegration, including health and wellness, cultural rehabilitation, housing, employment, education, recidivism prevention and family connections. The program starts with developing personal plans that promote autonomy and address individual needs. Residents are guided through a progressive pathway that closely monitors their development and emphasizes skills needed to live independently within the community.

As part of this approach, residents actively participate in various activities designed to support their growth, such as educational programs, vocational training and efforts to bring families back together. The final phase focuses on reintegration into society, focusing on finding housing and employment. This approach ensures that each resident is prepared for life after the institution, with a focus on long-term stability and personal empowerment.

Activities promote autonomy and community engagement. Residents have free access to shared spaces like a recreation room, a communal kitchen, and a fitness room. They can participate in paid work or volunteer opportunities within the community, as well as sports, both inside the facility and in the community. Residents can cook together. The facility has flexible visiting hours enabling social contact, with dedicated spaces for family visits.

Community-integration

Location and architecture:

Transition house Enghien is located in Enghien (Edingen), a town in the French-speaking region of Belgium with about 16 515 of inhabitants.¹ The facility is located in a relatively remote area compared to the surrounding communities. From the outside, the building looks like a normal building within the community and is located along a busy road. It has a good bus connection to the city center and train station.

¹City Population. (2022). *Enghien*. Retrieved October 4, 2024, from https://www.citypopulation.de/en/belgium/urbanareas/hainaut_brabant_wallon_/10711__enghien/

This location was chosen because the building was available and had enough space to be converted into a transition house with the support of the government, the mayor and the municipality. Prior to the current opening of transition house Enghien, there was a transition house previously operated by G4S. Due to the closure of the previous facility, Serco, the current operator, collaborated with the municipality to establish a new transition house in the area.



Transition house Enghien is located in a large, old office building, making the layout different from typical residential houses. The facility has private bedrooms, shared bathrooms, a living room, a kitchen, a visitor's room and areas for leisure activities. Outside, there is a garden with a purpose for activities and lawns surrounding the building. Each room has large windows overlooking a maize field, providing natural light.

Upon entering, visitors first see a computer for registration, giving the facility a more formal tone. This feeling is enhanced by the presence of surveillance cameras throughout the building. To create a more inviting atmosphere, elements such as paintings, plants and comfortable seating have been added.

Interaction with the community:

Transition house Enghien has built a positive relationship with the local community, supported by the local government. The transition house works closely with the municipality, police, fire department and other authorities to promote a respectful environment for both residents and locals. This collaboration provides residents with opportunities to volunteer or work within the community, allowing them to make meaningful contributions and build bonds. Residents are encouraged to engage with the community as needed, for example, by using local services or playing sports in the community. Because the facility opened only recently, it remains to be seen how community integration will further manifest itself in practice.

Transition house Enghien

Founded: 2024

Capacity: 15

Security level: Low

Nearest city/town: Enghien
(Belgium)

Nature of interaction:

Visited by VZW De Huizen
(01/10/2024)

Publicity/ read more

- About the opening of Transition House Enghien on the website of the Belgian prison administration:

Team Justitie. (2024, March 1). *La cinquième maison de transition du pays ouvrira à Enghien*. Retrieved October 4, 2024, from <https://www.teamjustitie.be/fr/2024/03/01/01-03-la-cinquieme-maison-de-transition-du-pays-ouvrira-a-enghien/>
- Flyer about Transition House Enghien on the official website of Transition House Enghien:

ORS. (2024). *Maison de transition Enghien*. LinkedIn. Retrieved October 4, 2024, from <https://media.licdn.com/dms/document/media/D4E1FAQFI439oUjkjNg/feedshare-document-pdf-analyzed/0/1727546031536?e=1729123200&v=beta&t=CyiKkvn9X1llkj0KsWkk4EJ5pUjHXXKRU6DMJ-BmRos>
- About Transition House Enghien on the official website of Transition House Enghien:

Maison de Transition Enghien. (n.d.). *Home*. Retrieved October 4, 2024, from <https://www.maison-transition-enghien.be/>