

The Fight against Under-protection. Uses of and Reflections on

Automated Decision Making in Social Work



Host: Nele Schroyen, VVSG

**strong
social
work**

FRITERIE 1900

Today's session:

Introduction

Sarah Spiessens on proactive services in Ghent

Panel debate:

Joy Clauw, Katty Creytens, Marjolijn De Wilde, Sarah Spiessens

The Fight against Under-protection. Uses of and Reflections on

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gent:



Proactive services in Ghent

Sarah Spiessens
Project leader



Context

▶ City of Ghent

- 267.712 inhabitants

▶ Digital divide

- 39% of the Flemish people has weak digital skills
- 49% of the Belgian people doesn't succeed in filling out e-forms or e-gov applications
- 74% of the households with a lower income are 'digitally vulnerable'

▶ Vulnerable target groups

- 1 in 6 people in Ghent live under the poverty line
- 8.318 persons are on social benefits
- 51.624 persons are entitled to 'preferential reimbursement'

▶ Non-take up

- Bigger than we think
- Varies between 40% and 70%
- Multiple causes: right holders face barriers
- "barometer of government inefficiency"

Proactive services: an important focus in Ghent

An aerial photograph of Ghent, Belgium, at sunset. The sky is a warm orange and yellow. In the foreground, the spires and towers of the Ghent Cathedral are silhouetted against the bright sun. The city's rooftops and buildings are visible in the background. Three semi-transparent dark grey text boxes are overlaid on the image, containing white text.

More than
a Smart
City

Turn the process
around: instead of
asking the user for
proof,
we use the data
we already have

Removing barriers
for targetgroups:
higher take-up
= reducing poverty

How does it work?

Administrative
Simplification

(1. Application)



5. Grant service (or not)

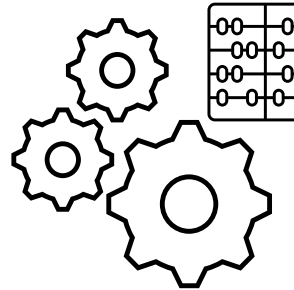
Higher
take-up

More efficient
services

2. Query



4. Check criteria



GDPR-proof
Data-minimization

3. Loading data



(National)
registries

What did we do? (1)

Free garbage bags for people with an allowance or social status for reimbursement

- 29.704 families receive coupon at home (2022)
- We check for new rightsholders 4x/year
- 61 manually submitted documents of proof (instead of 1.300 in 2019)



What did we do? (2)

School/daycare expenses: discount for parents with allowance + low fiscal income

- Automatically applied to the parents' invoices
- 4 times as many families reached
- Halving the amount of letters sent out by the administration about outstanding payments



What did we do? (3)

UiTPAS reduction at cultural & sports-activities

- Automatical when citizen buys UiTPAS at the city-counter based on id-card
- Check on allowance, social status or known within social services of Ghent
- 3365 UiTPAS-cards sold with this automated check for discount (since November '22)



What did we do? (4)

Free registration disabled persons/ social tariff for people on social allowance

- Proof is no longer acquired with application
- City will check criteria in registries



Careful: the tool gives us an advice, not a decision!

- No black box!
- In support of the city servant
- Public servant can overrule advice when the citizen can provide more accurate proof
- Awareness of the quality of the data available
- Very important to train employees on possible gray areas





gent:

Challenges

- ▶ ... part of the solution?

Available data

▶ **Criteria must be verifiable in datasets**

- Is it available in authentic registries
- How accurate/ actual is the data
- Grey areas in reality versus binary IT set-up
- IT as a tool to support us, not as a black box

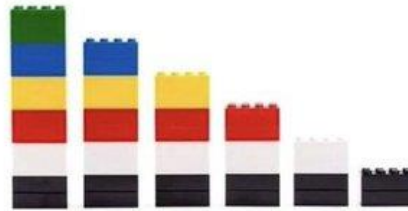
Data



Sorted



Presented Visually



Business Intelligence



Interoperability between different levels of government

- **City of Gent + IT-partner [district09](#)**
- **Digitaal Vlaanderen**
 - [MAGDA \(maximale gegevensdeling ts administraties\)](#)
- **National data sources**
 - [Kruispuntbank Sociale Zekerheid](#)
 - Rijksregister(s)
 - FOD. Financiën
- [Informatieveiligheidscomité](#)
 - Deliberation on data/ GDPR



Usercentered

- **Citizen:**
 - Focus on vulnerable targetgroup
 - Proactive => barriers disappear
 - Transparency
- **Colleagues at citycounter**
 - What's the current process
 - Where do they foresee problems/ "grey areas"
 - Create trust in the tool
 - Education



Legal process

▶ **GDPR and privacy-issues?**

→ The purpose of processing the data must have a legal base in local legislation

=> Public interest

→ Protocol with source/registry

→ Authorization by committee on information security

→ Proportional data-enquiry

→ Security and integrity

→ Opt-out possibility for citizen



Proactieve dienstverlening Stad Gent (B)

Gent kent door slimme digitalisering kortingen en premies toe aan inwoners die hier recht op hebben. Dit is grote vereenvoudiging voor burgers.



Plans for the future

- ▶ **In 2024 3 new usecases:**
 - Social restaurants
 - Taxi-vouchers
 - Vouchers for bike-repair/rental



Panelists:

Joy Clauw, head of department of
'rechtenverkenning' in Ostend

Katty Creytens, policy officer for the Belgian
Anti Poverty Network

Marjolijn De Wilde, postdoctoral researcher,
KU Leuven - Centre for Sociological Research
(CeSO)

Sarah Spiessens, project leader proactive
services, Ghent



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Join us in the debate!



Thank you!

See you at lunch & Living Library



