

# 29<sup>th</sup> COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONFERENCE OF DIRECTORS OF PRISON AND PROBATION SERVICES

*“Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law at the heart of Prisons and Probation”*

Sofia (Bulgaria)

24-25 June 2024

Autonomy of prisoners



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# **SMALL-SCALE DETENTION IN BELGIUM**

# SMALL-SCALE DETENTION IN BELGIUM

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DETENTION HOUSE  
TRANSITION HOUSE  
DH VERSUS TH  
CHALLENGE FOR THE  
FUTURE



# SMALL-SCALE DETENTION IN BELGIUM

## DETENTION HOUSE

- What is a detention house ?
- For who ?
- Daily life
- Goals
- Vision
- ➡ How to reach the autonomy?
- Difficulties for residents
- ➡ Lack of structure
- ➡ New problems appears



# DETENTION HOUSES IN BELGIUM

## SHORT MOVIE



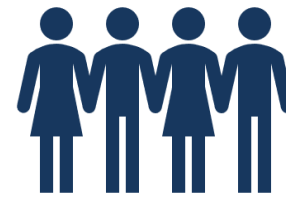
# DETENTION HOUSES IN BELGIUM



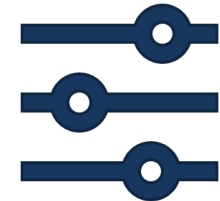
Small houses of  
20-60 residents



Only  
personal  
officers



Integration  
in community



Adapted  
daily life

# DETENTION HOUSES IN BELGIUM

## TARGET GROUP



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SENTENCED TO UP TO 3  
YEARS OF PRISON MAX

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NO SEXUAL OFFENDERS AND  
NO CONVICTS OF TERRORIST  
ACTS

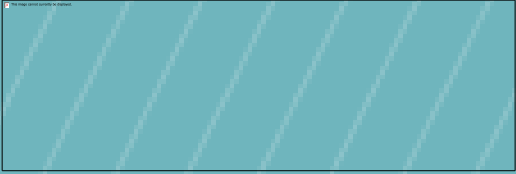
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SELECTION





# Personal officers





# THE BUILDING: FORMER RESIDENTIAL CARE CENTER FOR THE ELDERLY





**IT'S A MATTER OF  
COMMUNICATION, BUT  
COMMUNICATION IS  
A MATTER OF FEELING.**

**(A. DEPREZ)**



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# DETENTION HOUSES IN BELGIUM

## THE DAILY LIFE

- **Open system**

- Restricted access: only entrances and exits are controlled
- Autonomy:** the residents can move around freely in the detention house
- Only leaving the detention house during the day and only with authorization

- **Adapted daily life**

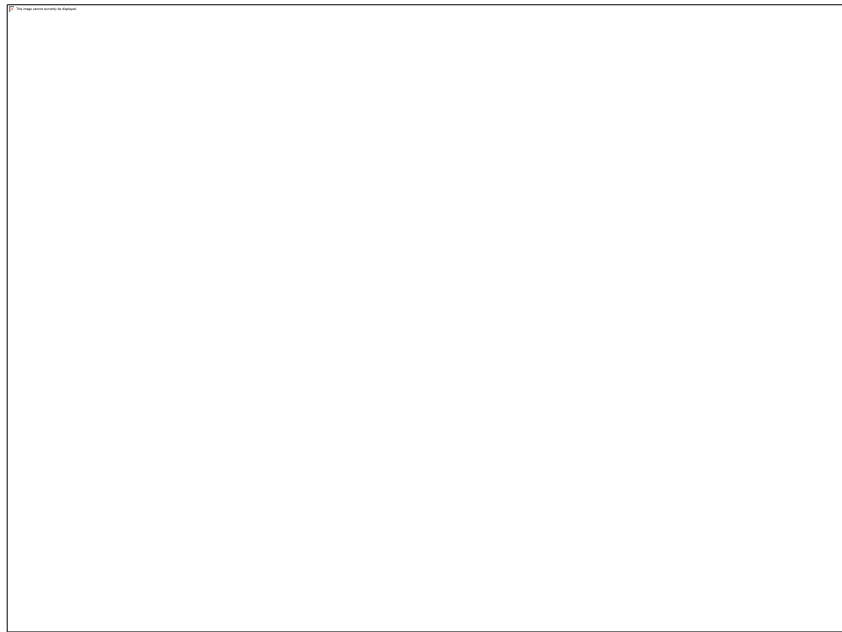
- Low security
- Learning to live with others and taking care of themselves



# DETENTION HOUSES IN BELGIUM



## GOALS



- Reduce the pains of imprisonment
- Improve reintegration in society
- Adapt the level of security according to risk assessment
- Normalization







# GOALS

- AUTONOMY
- TAKING RESPONSABILITY
- DIGITALIZATION
- EMPOWERMENT
- INTEGRATION IN COMMUNITY



# DETENTION HOUSES IN BELGIUM

## THE VISION

**How to reach the  
autonomy ?**

- Humane execution of punishment
- Focus on dialogue and dynamic security
- Living group activities
- Digitalization
- Focus on reintegration
- Positive living environment
- Small-scaled
- Limiting avoidable pains of imprisonment
- Autonomy
- Empowerment



# DETENTION HOUSES IN BELGIUM

## PRACTICAL DIFFERENCES

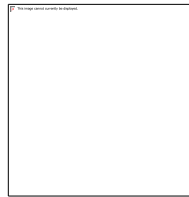
TRADITIONAL PRISON	DETENTION HOUSE
Uniform for staff and inmates	No uniform for staff and residents
No control over own movement	Keys to the room
Mobile phone forbidden	Mobile phone, laptop and tablet allowed
Penitentiary furloughs occur less often	Lots of penitentiary furloughs
Punitive...	Positive living climate
Two hours on the prison yard	Access to garden between 6.30 am - 21.30 pm
No money allowed	Own management of money
Temporarily unavailable for job market	Available for job market
Fences, barbed wire, bars and locked doors	Front door and few internal locked doors
Language: cell, inmate, chief, section, family name	New language: room, resident, personal officer, living group, first name

# DETENTION HOUSES IN BELGIUM

## DIFFICULTIES FOR RESIDENTS



LACK OF STRUCTURE RESULTS IN INSECURITY



•AUTONOMY HAS TO BE MANAGED



•NEW ROLES OF STAFFMEMBERS CAUSE STRESS

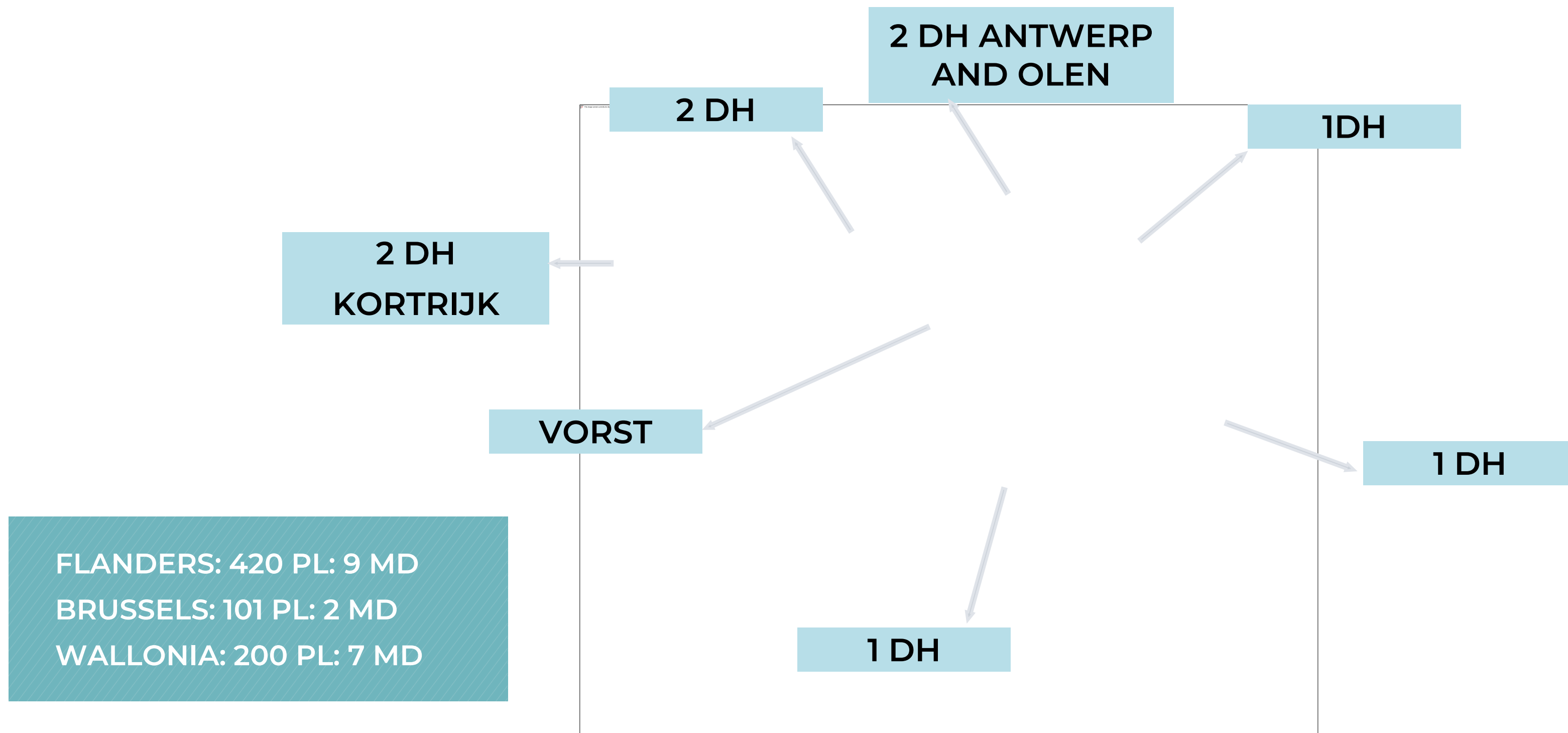


•DIGITALIZATION CAUSES NEW PAINS OF IMPRISONMENT





# THE PLANNED DETENTION HOUSES



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# SMALL-SCALE DETENTION IN BELGIUM

## TRANSITION HOUSES

- ❖ WHAT IS A TRANSITION HOUSE ?
- ❖ FOR WHO ?
- ❖ GOALS ?
- ❖ DAILY LIFE?
- ❖ HOW TO PROMOTE THE AUTONOMY ?



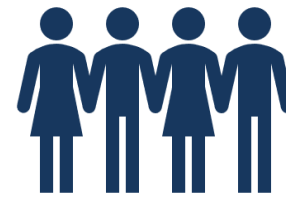
# TRANSITION HOUSES IN BELGIUM



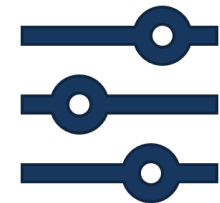
Small houses of  
15 residents



Only  
Coaches



Integration  
in community



Adapted  
daily life

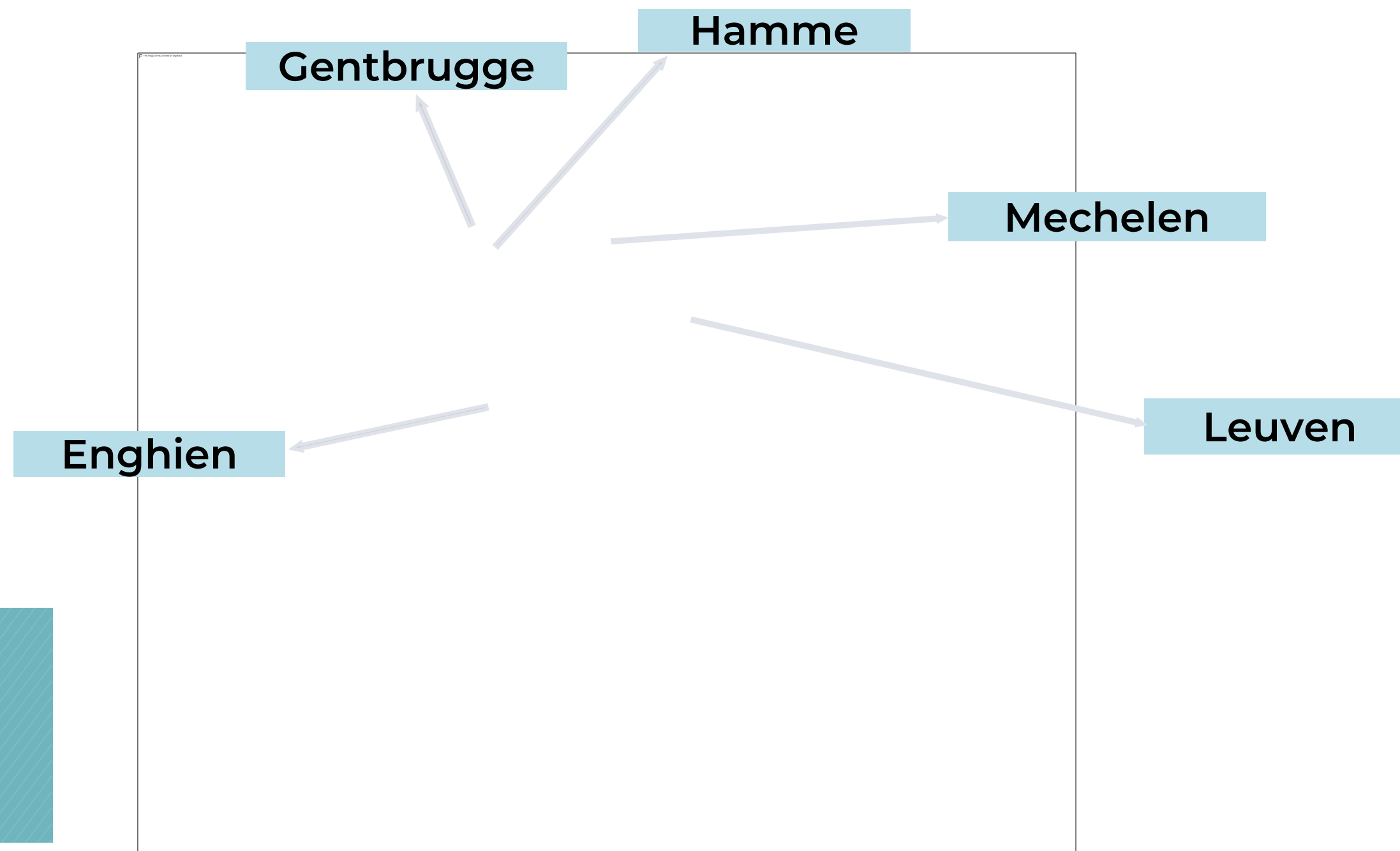


# TRANSITION HOUSES IN BELGIUM

- **Focus on reintegration**
  - All steps in the reintegration process are aimed at their return to society.
- **Positive living climate**
  - Respect for one another
- **Empowerment**
  - Residents are encouraged to take initiative, but are supported where needed.



# TRANSITION HOUSES IN BELGIUM



FLANDERS: 4, 60 pl.

WALLONIA: 1, 16 pl.

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# THE TRANSITION HOUSES IN BELGIUM VS DETENTION HOUSES

## PRACTICAL DIFFERENCES DH VERSUS TH

Transition house	Detention house
Managed by the private sector, legally not a prison	considered as a prison and managed by the prison administration
Long sentence and problematic reintegration	Short sentence
Transition between jail and freedom (outside)	Asap after judgement
Small-scale detention => up to 16 detainees	up to 60 residents
coaches	Personal officers
Living in group	Living in group
No uniform	No uniform
Cellphones and laptop authorized	Cellphones and laptop authorized
Considered as an alternative way of serving the sentence	Same law than in prison and so considered as a detention



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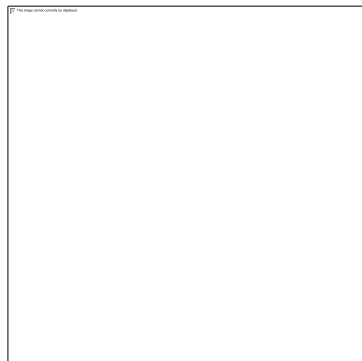
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# SMALL-SCALE DETENTION IN BELGIUM

## CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE



### What more can we do?

- Why not broaden the target group for detention houses to include a wider category of offenders?
- Why not create different kinds of detention facilities to respond to the varying needs of the residents in a more adapted way?
- How could we work with community ?

**THANK YOU FOR  
YOU ATTENTION !**



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