Updated action plan focuses on living with people with dementia

152,000: Number of people with dementia to increase by 25% by 2030

Prevention, a nuanced perception and quality care and support. These are the spearheads of the updated dementia plan. The cornerstones from the first plan (2010) are still current today. Human dignity and quality of life for people with dementia and those around them take centre stage here. The Government of Flanders takes note of the plan with which the Flemish authorities want to continue to work towards a dementia-friendly Flanders.

According to the latest calculations (Steyaert, J. Prevalentie: hoeveel personen in Vlaanderen hebben dementie?, 2016 (in print)), currently 122,000 people in Flanders have dementia. Owing to the longer life expectancy their number is expected to rise by one third to more than 152,000 by 2030 and to even double by 2060, since the chance of developing dementia increases with age. 70% of the people with dementia live at home, either with or without the support of family, acquaintances and friends. The annual cost for the care and support of people with dementia worldwide is estimated at over 465 billion euros. This is comparable with Belgium’s annual gross domestic product. In other words, the care and support for people with dementia poses a great challenge to informal caregivers, care providers, welfare facilities and policy makers. For this reason the dementia plan reinforces the pursuit of a dementia-friendly Flanders and also invests in prevention.

From the list of priorities:

1) Tomorrow’s policy will resolutely concentrate on prevention and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. “A healthy life and a healthy living environment are not just major steps towards a future with fewer cardiovascular diseases or less diabetes. We now know that a healthy life style can actually help delay or
prevent dementia”, says Jo Vandeurzen, Flemish Minister for Welfare, Public Health and Family. “What’s good for the heart is good for the brain”.

2) A nuanced perception of dementia remains important. That is why the campaign ‘Forget Dementia. Remember the Person’ is continued, given its success. The concept ‘dementia-friendly municipality’ will be further promoted in the future within the framework of the age-friendly municipalities. By means of a widget municipalities will be able to make their efforts in the field of dementia visible.

3) Quality care and support. Proper care and support throughout the stages of dementia is a prerequisite for the quality of life of people with dementia and their loved ones. The Flemish authorities develop criteria which help care providers in offering customised quality care to people with dementia and their acquaintances and friends.

4) Early detection and proper care at each stage in the process of dementia are major components of the plan. The focus on different and adjusted living arrangements, the growth paths in care and support and the supporting informal care and end of life care are continued. With the Flemish Pharmacist Network an action is set up to give community pharmacists a role in helping to detect overburdening of informal caregivers at an early stage and signposting them to support services.

5) To increase the coverage of culture-sensitive care for people with dementia and to better reach immigrant target groups, local initiatives are organised with the regional centres of expertise, involving both care actors and the communities themselves.

6) Specific attention is devoted to people with young onset dementia. It is estimated that in Flanders 5,400 people have young onset dementia. For this reason, the criteria for admission to residential care centres have already been relaxed for under-65s. Together with the relevant actors the centre of expertise on dementia will fine-tune existing support methodologies for people suffering from young onset dementia.

7) Flanders will also further support scientific research into dementia and dementia care.

“Quality care for people with dementia, informal caregivers and care professionals requires an integrated policy vision”, says Jurn Verschraegen, Director of the Flanders Centre of Expertise on Dementia. “With this updated Dementia Plan Flanders joins the
European movement towards a dementia-friendly society. From prevention to end of life care, from a nuanced perception to particular focus on people with young onset dementia. This Dementia Plan responds to today’s and tomorrow’s challenges. Moreover, it is fully consistent with the informal care plan which was presented to the Government of Flanders last week. The centres of expertise on dementia are fully committed to this plan!”

>> For the press: Nico Krols – Spokesman for Jo Vandeurzen – 0476 907 972 – nico.krols@vlaanderen.be