Universal Design Living Lab, Hasselt, Belgium
Demonstration House for UD home adaptation

PARTNERS
PXL, University College, Department of Healthcare - Hasselt University, Faculty of Architecture
INTER, Flemish center of expertise for accessibility and Universal Design

Architects: SIMONI Architecten (Hasselt), and TOKO Architects (Lier)
Project date: 2013
Location: Guffenslaan 39, 3500 Hasselt, Belgium
Website: http://www.woonlabo.be/en

History
The old brick style Maternity Building, built in 1913, was given a different function in 1995 when it became part of the PXL University College Healthcare Campus. More than a decade later the adjacent caretaker’s home was transformed into a Universal Design (UD) Living Lab, partly for teaching & research, and partly as a public place to illustrate and to demonstrate UD principles for private homes and for adaptable housing. The project is a joint initiative of Hasselt University, PXL University College, and TGB Office for Accessibility. It was funded by the European Community, by the federal (Flemish) government and by the provincial government. Over 30 private companies have sponsored the initial project and have contributed innovative solutions.

Universal Design aspects
The Living Lab is conceived as an experimental and contemporary synthesis of the UD concept. It is genuinely user-centered and favors open innovation. The demonstration part of the UD Living Lab consists of two dwelling units, housed in a renovated typical row house. The ground level apartment is fully conceived and equipped for semi-ambulant and for non-ambulant people, for home-care and for ‘Ageing in Place’. Two steps at the entrance have been replaced by an indoor lift platform, the kitchen and bathroom serve a diversity of users, and home automation compliments possible functional disabilities.

The second apartment, on the two upper floors, is wheelchair accessible (visitabile), but focuses primarily on visual impairments, on mental disabilities, and on families with children with disabilities. The visitor center offers facilities for training and research, for information and consultation, for exhibitions and for lectures. Toilet spaces include a changing place, a shower toilet, plus facilities for stoma care, and for breastfeeding and baby care. The emphasis is on elegant and non-stigmatizing design, and on functionality for the widest diversity of users.

Universal Design Competition 2018
IUD – Institut für Universal Design KG, Munich, GERMANY

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