

Facility supporting the social integration of people with psychosocial disabilities

SPAIN – CATALUNYA / SUPPORT GIRONA – OPEN SPACE (ESPAI OBERT)

In 2017 Support-Girona, an NGO based in Catalonia, Spain, launched a daytime facility called Open Space (Espai Obert). The facility caters to the basic needs of persons with psychosocial disabilities, often homeless or with a history of substance abuse, with services such as hygiene, nutrition, and socialization. It is jointly run with the Public Mental Health Network (IAS), a public entity, to enhance decision-making and skills development. Between 2017 and 2022 more than 100 people have benefited from the service.

Problem targeted

People with psychosocial disabilities are often institutionalized due to conflict within their social environment, such as homelessness or lack of family support.

Solution, innovation, and impact

Open Space is a community-based service that aims to support people with psychosocial disabilities to develop independently without the supervision of professionals. This is the only such facility in Girona without strict access rules and that does not require treatment commitment. The facility is a space where people visit voluntarily, with minimal managerial intervention. It has a kitchen, living room, dining room, washing machine, patio, and showers – all designed to guarantee a safe environment for personal hygiene and food.

“Open Space had a huge impact on the lives of persons who can finally enjoy their right to live independently.”

Mrs. Glòria Cerrato, Technical Director,
Support-Girona Foundation

Staff from Support-Girona and IAS are on-site from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Monday to Friday, and for a few hours on the weekend. During these hours those using the facility are invited to participate in the centre's routines, such as preparing meals, doing laundry, or taking care of the garden.

In 2021, Open Space moved to a new location to make it more accessible and adaptable to the needs of its user base. The average service use time is about 10–12 months per user. In 2022, 28 people used the facility, compared to 19 in 2021.



“Espai Obert” is a community-based service but without strict rules.

Outlook, transferability, and funding

Support Girona uses its own funds for the space and staff on site, and health care professionals are funded and provided by IAS. In 2021, Open Space received funding from Dipsalut (the Independent Public Health Body of Girona) and €16,000 from the Caixabank Foundation. The relocation and remodelling were done using Support Girona's funds and amounted to €200,000. Annual operating costs are €52,000.

Looking forward, Support Girona aims to work with the health department of the Catalan Government to replicate the model across all of Catalonia.

FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2017

- In the first half of 2022 more than 3,700 meals were cooked in the Open Space kitchen.
- The average service use time is about 10–12 months per user.
- *A project of Civil Society.*



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