

Mobile shop Thomas More University of Applied Sciences big step towards first fully inclusive campus

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Geel – Thomas More University of Applied Sciences today opened its new project within IC Life (Inclusive Campus Life). This project is a unique collaboration between the departments of Social work, ICT and Construction of the university and with generous funding from the OCMW Geel. Socially vulnerable target groups (in particular people with disabilities) sell their goods together with nine social partner organizations in a specially tailored mobile shop. The aim of this project is to achieve boundary-breaking inclusiveness inside and outside the campus.

Thomas More students of the bachelor Construction, Social work and ICT together constructed this mobile shop, complete with kitchen facilities, a counter for sales and a small showroom (for displaying cakes, small gadgets etc). The shop is fully wheelchair accessible, has height-adjustable parts and is equipped with a special cash register containing icons (pictograms), developed by an ICT student with his own start-up.

Lieve Gios and Henk van Aelst coached the Construction students. “The goal of this project is to make the campus inclusive with this mobile shop”, says Lieve Gios, Construction department teacher. “We want to create an inclusive feeling within the campus and beyond. They see the project as an opportunity to build bridges between disciplines in the interest of people with and without intellectual disabilities”.

“Talents cannot be pigeonholed. The cooperation between the various departments and organizations is an added value for each other and for society”, the students say.

The IC Life initiative is a three-year international project of which Thomas More is the project leader. It is funded by the EU program Erasmus Plus. The aim of IC Life is to make college campuses throughout Europe more inclusive and accessible.

“We currently have eight students with intellectual disabilities. They participate in philosophy sessions together with regular philosophy students. These are questions that concern every human being, such as the meaning of life and one’s place in society. All these different students enrich each other and look for ways to work together”, says Aleidis Devillé, project manager for IC Life.



On Friday morning the mobile shop was opened in the presence of participating teachers, managers, students, partner organization Oxfam, and the mayor of Geel Vera Celis. Participant Jan Cuypers, who is himself a wheelchair user, was allowed to open the shop.

"I think it's fabulous what these people are doing here. The sales table is very nice and completely adapted to me. I think it's a very nice project to work with", he proudly says.

Adjustable parts and a special cash register

Construction student Ruben Duré explains how the shop is constructed.

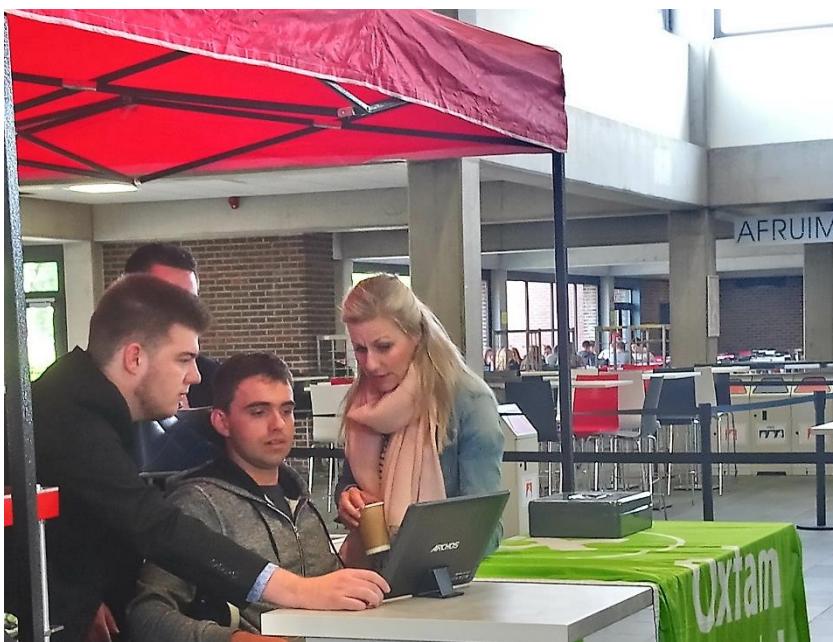
"The mobile shop is made up of various individual elements that can be adjusted in height to meet everyone's needs and expectations. There is even a built-in refrigerator and a sandwich maker to make waffles or toasted sandwiches. I hope everyone is happy with it and can have a lot of fun with it," he says.

The cash register has also been specially developed for people with a (mental) disability. It is an application on a tablet, developed by ICT student and owner of Jordesign Jordi de Roeck. The app works with icons (picograms) and calculates fully automatically. "The only thing the user has to do is click on the product and the given amount of money. The user does not have to do anything else. The app calculates which amount and which coins have to be returned and how much the product costs", says Jordi.

The shopping cart will remain in the central Agora at Thomas More. Both students and people from the partner organizations can continue to use the mobile shop. This autumn, the organizers will make agreements with the partner organizations about how to best make use of the shop.



Oxfam stacks the show shelves with their products just before the opening.



Jan Cuypers learns how to operate the cash register from developer Jordi De Roeck



Project assistant Jenny van der Aa opens the event



Project co-ordinator Aleidis Devillé tells how the project came about. Mayor Vera Celis is also present.



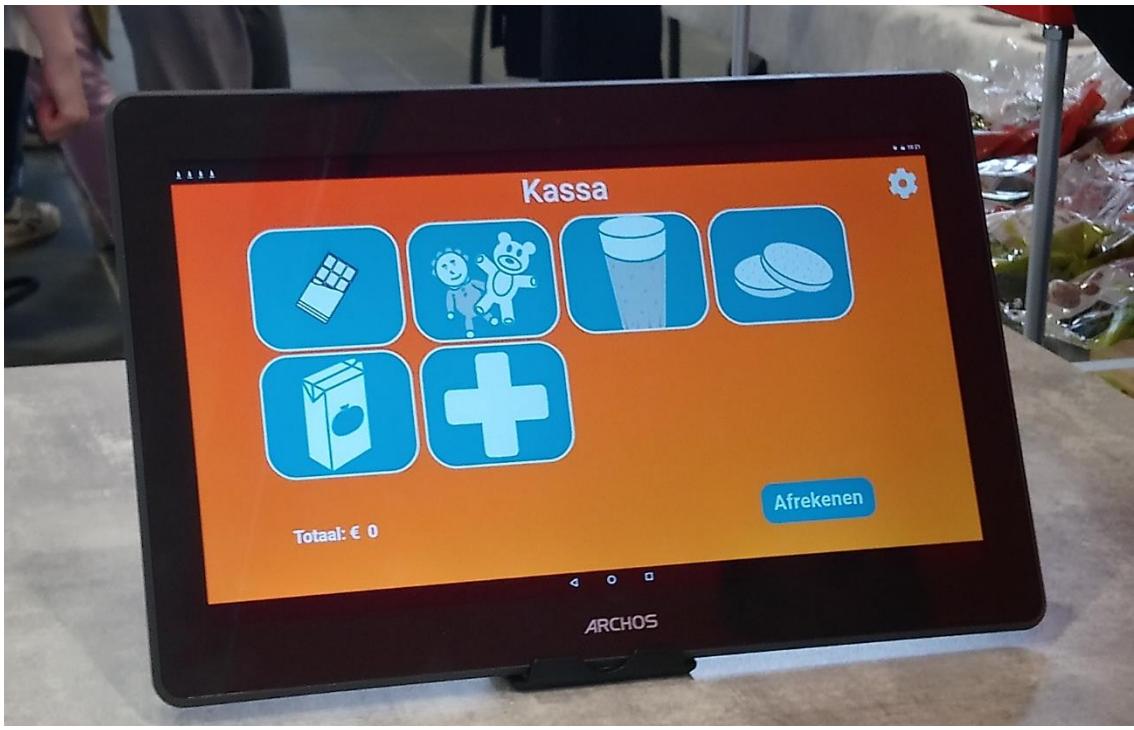
Proud Construction students



Jan Cuypers, operating shop assistant-of-the-day, opens the mobile shop



Behind the register



The cash register is an application which functions entirely with icons (pictograms)



The store shelves with products from Oxfam