



European Voluntary Action for an Inclusive Society

The Netherlands

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Combating social exclusion by voluntary work

Country report of the Netherlands

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Dutch voluntary organisations

“Voluntary organisations are indispensable in the social safety net of the Dutch society. Sometimes as pioneer, sometimes in close cooperation with local and provincial authorities. Local voluntary work has an important task in social activation. Let’s accept this challenge and join forces in action and work together for social activation”

“It is wonderful to see how people start something again after such a long time. That it truly improves the quality of their live and that you have been able to play a role in that”

“I have noticed that people who do voluntary work with us as part of social activation are often much more committed”

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Introduction

Combating social exclusion is one of the major elements in the modernisation of the European social model. Two years ago in October 2000, the European Council of Lisbon finalised the objectives in the fight against social exclusion and the eradication of poverty. The European Council of Nice in December 2000 approved the following objectives.² The key objectives are:

1. to facilitate participation in employment and access by all to resources, rights, goods and services;
2. to prevent the risks of exclusion;
3. to help the most vulnerable;
4. to mobilise all relevant bodies.

In 2001, each member state of the European Union agreed to draw up a National Action Plan (NAP) to combat poverty and social exclusion, based on the four above mentioned key objectives agreed in Nice. In 2003, the new National Action Plans will report on the experiences gained in achieving the targets agreed upon in 2001.

Country report: Social exclusion in The Netherlands

In this paper, we take a closer look at the role of voluntary work in combating social exclusion in one of the member states of the European Union: the Netherlands. First the role of the Dutch national government, local councils and other relevant institutions and organisations in welfare policy in combating social exclusion will be described, followed by the role of voluntary organisations and other organisations active in the voluntary sector. Furthermore, the policy on social exclusion by voluntary work and the involvement of the above mentioned organisations will be discussed.

In order to provide an overview of the current situation in the Netherlands the second part of this paper highlights several projects on combating social exclusion by voluntary work. Projects initiated by both national welfare organisations as well as voluntary organizations or voluntary centres. The described projects serve as an illustration of all the initiatives being undertaken in the field of social exclusion and voluntary work in the Netherlands. They do not represent a complete inventory of all projects and initiatives.

² European Council, 2000.

1. Role of the Dutch government

1.1 The Dutch National Action Plan

The Dutch strategy to combat social exclusion - presented in the National Action Plan³ - is based on four main principles, which are closely related to the key objectives of the European Council:

1. Promotion of social participation in the form of paid employment or - where people are very remote from the labour market - by means of social activation.
2. Guaranteeing security of income for people who are not able to support themselves independently. A generic universal minimum income policy in combination with more specific subsidy schemes and local individual income support ensure that the purchasing power of minimum income recipients as well as low income earners is maintained.
3. Promotion of accessibility of social services and provisions in the areas of housing, education, care, ICT, public transport, legal assistance, integration, care for the homeless and solidarity within the family.
4. Encouraging active input by and close cooperation between all stakeholders in combating poverty and social exclusion. To ensure the success of the comprehensive approach to poverty and social exclusion, the government encourages partnership between the various public authorities and community organisations involved; involvement of (organisations of) vulnerable groups; and socially responsible business.

Often it is assumed that there is no actual poverty in the Netherlands - compared to other countries in the world - because of a well-developed system of social provisions, a relatively high minimum wage and a relatively low unemployment figure. However, there is 'silent' or hidden poverty among people who rely on benefit. The almost one million people who are declared fully or partly incapable for paid labour and claim disability benefits are a matter of high concern. Some people are at risk of becoming socially excluded. Especially people who have no access to provisions, who have no regular work, and who do not have a network of family and friends providing them with necessary support.

The policy on poverty and social exclusion is directed primarily towards combating a long term lack of future prospects for vulnerable individuals, households and groups. In elaborating this policy, the Dutch government gives priority to preventive measures above curative measures. Given the multidimensional nature of poverty and social exclusion, the government encourages measures which are based upon an integrated approach. This applies in particular for approaches that take the needs of citizens as a starting point, rather than the available provisions. In cases where vulnerable groups could be reached more effectively, this method of working will be given an additional boost. Furthermore, according to the Dutch NAP, initiatives by members of the public, that could reinforce the social cohesion of the community, need to be supported vigorously.

³ European Council, 2001.

1.2 Social exclusion in the Netherlands

The term 'social exclusion' was originally used during the sixties by French social scientists to refer to groups who lived in the margins of society, like homeless people, delinquents, and multi-problem families.⁴ Later on, the term was used in a broader sense. However, in the Netherlands the term 'social exclusion' is still being used to refer to several elements of exclusion. Some people use the term for being excluded from paid labour, others point to the exclusion of provisions and facilities, and some refer to social exclusion as the actual process of excluding. In most cases, social exclusion consists of an accumulation of exclusions. For instance, the loss of a job may have many consequences: loss of income, loss of consumption, social isolation, and geographical isolation. Another example: migration can lead to cultural exclusion and loss of communication.

The prevention of social exclusion is a major target of the Dutch welfare policy. When policymakers talk about social exclusion they tend to refer to people who do not fully participate in society, who are at risk of becoming socially isolated, and whom regular provisions do not reach. The Dutch government has set up two separate programmes to prevent social exclusion: social activation, and social (re) integration (and support) of vulnerable groups.⁵

1.2.1 Social activation

The idea of social activation was born in 1994 in Rotterdam.⁶ For some long term unemployed people there was little or no prospect of employment. Instead, local governments stimulated these people to perform voluntary work and informal care or to pursue an education. In 1996 the national government adopted this idea and made it possible for local governments to set up projects for long term unemployed.

The policy of social activation became highly successful. During the past years, thousands of long term unemployed people took part in voluntary work or other socially useful activities. Social activation reinstates a work routine, boosts the participants' social skills and prevents them from becoming socially isolated. For a substantial number of participants voluntary work acted as a step on the way (back) to the paid labour market.⁷ During the nineties, many alternatives to the regular paid job emerged, like paid work while keeping the allowance and the so-called Melkert-jobs in the social sector: assistants in schools, in hospitals, at the traffic police, etc. Special organisations for mediation of people with a 'long distance to the labour market' were formed, often supported by local governments.

Given the success of this policy in preventing social isolation and guiding people back to the labour market, nowadays the target groups of social activation not only include long term unemployed but also elderly people, homeless people, ex-psychiatric patients, people with disabilities, ex-delinquents and migrants. In the coming years, the number of long term unemployed people who are included in social activation programmes will be increased. Steps will be taken to determine whether social activation could also be a feasible option for people with an employment disability. This could lead to a decrease of people claiming disability benefit, nowadays almost one million people. People who have been declared fully or partly incapable to work based on medical grounds.

Social activation has proven to be helpful in combating social exclusion in the Netherlands. It means a successful combination of two policies: welfare and employment.⁸

⁴ Engbersen, 2002.

⁵ Ministerie van VWS, 1999.

⁶ Engbersen, 2002.

⁷ European Council, 2001.

⁸ European Council, 2001.

1.2.2 Social integration

Vulnerable groups

The policy of social integration is aimed at people with psychosocial problems who have difficulties with social functioning, like homeless people, drug addicts, alcohol addicts, people with psychiatric disorders. These people are vulnerable and often need a network of support around them, like community and supported living, supplied by professionals and volunteers.⁹ In the nineties initiatives were taken to integrate vulnerable people by offering them labour or labour-like activities at so-called 'care farms'.

People with disabilities

A group of people that have only in recent years received more and more attention are people with disabilities. In many places in society the issue is being raised as how to find ways to enable people with a disability to take part in society as normal as possible despite their limitations. In this light the expression community care is being used. Initiated by several societal developments numerous projects to stimulate active participation by this group of people are being set up. Volunteering is one of the possibilities to try and integrate people with disabilities (back) into society.

Volunteering by people with a physical disability only has a chance of success if there is sufficient support throughout the organisation. Voluntary organisations express the need of accurate information on policy and decrees on this subject. They also point out that they lack the financial resources to adjust a working place for disabled persons, since the subsidy is currently linked to 'paid' work. There should be a balance in the investment of support of volunteers with disabilities and the contribution the volunteer can actually bring into the organisation. For a successful project in activating social participation and integration of people with a disability, it is important to inform all relevant parties openly and regularly. It is important that the emphasis should be on the possibilities and skills of people with a disability, not on their deficits.¹⁰

Immigrants

The Dutch government considers participation an obvious affair for civilians, but at the same time acknowledges that the available conditions are not equally distributed amongst all different groups present in society.

Since 1988 the Dutch government offers by law every eligible newcomer to the Netherlands an integration programme. This programme aims to prevent newcomers from exclusion by training them in the Dutch language, orientate them in the Dutch society and supports them to the labour market. Unemployed migrants who have arrived before 1988 in the Netherlands - and who are euphemistically called 'old comers' - are given an (re) integration programme to enter the labour market. For those for whom preparation for the labour market is not the appropriate option, like older migrants or migrants who have little labour skills and experience, like migrant mothers, the programme focuses on social activation and training in the Dutch language.

For instance research indicates that migrants do not volunteer as much and as often as the original Dutch people do.¹¹ This means that their social participation is small compared to the non-migrants, thereby maintaining a less included position in society. In Rotterdam, the Multicultural Centre for Participation helps to prepare organisations for the participation of migrants. Its serves as a mediator between organisations and migrants who are willing to volunteer.¹²

Youth

The youth has the future. Although social exclusion in the Netherlands is not specifically aimed at younger people there are projects to support children and adolescents who need extra attention. An example is Match in Rotterdam. It is a division of the international Big Brother Big Sister movement. The project matches children from 4 to 12 years old and adolescents from 12 to 24 years with volunteer buddies. Together they undertake several activities, like shopping and cooking. The buddy primarily serves as someone who gives emotional support and trust.

⁹ Ministerie van VWS, 1999.

¹⁰ NOV, sVM, Verwey-Jonker Instituut, 2002.

¹¹ Van Daal, 2002a.

¹² Van Daal & Broenink, 1998.

2. National organisations on welfare policy

According to the Welfare Act, the Dutch government is responsible for stimulating and facilitating social welfare. One of the ways to achieve this is the maintenance of a nationwide welfare infrastructure of organisations. These organisations have the tasks to monitor and recognise developments in society; to stimulate the development of new methods, services and activities; to develop innovative projects with a nationwide significance; and to evaluate policy and methods. For performing these tasks, the organisations are partly subsidised by the government. The following organisations are part of the national welfare infrastructure:

- Institute for Multicultural Development (FORUM)
- Dutch Centre for Political Participation (IPP)
- National Centre for Community Work (LCO)
- Netherlands Institute for Care and Welfare (NIZW)
- Netherlands Organisation for Voluntary organisations (NOV)
- Dutch Foundation for Volunteer Management (sVM)
- Verwey-Jonker Institute

Institute for Multicultural development (FORUM)

FORUM, the institute for Multicultural development is the national expertise and support centre for multicultural development. The institute aims to build a multicultural society, which is based on social equality and mutual respect between all different groups in our society. FORUM develops methods and strategies to achieve this aim. FORUM also informs the public about multicultural development and stimulates public debate on subjects concerning the multicultural society. Furthermore, FORUM has an advisory role towards the Dutch government.

Dutch Centre for Political Participation (IPP)

The Dutch Centre for Political Participation is an organisation with no party affiliations whose objective is to promote political and social participation. It aims to combat inequalities between sections of the population in their real opportunities to exert political influence. The IPP is commissioned by government agencies and non-governmental organisations to carry out activities designed to directly involve citizens and their organisations in policy making. The IPP encourages and organises debates, meetings and working conferences on political and social issues. Besides, the Centre develops courses, seminars and educational material. IPP pays special attention to newcomers, women and socio-economically deprived groups.

National Centre for Local Welfare (LCO)

Community work is mainly the responsibility of the local councils. The LCO offers organisational advice and support on the quality of communal living and social networks in districts, neighbourhoods and groups. Community work focuses on the quality of services and relations between citizens and the variety of institutes and organisations. Community work stimulates local initiatives, self-employability and participation in many areas, ranging from living and living conditions to social (in) security, environment and health care.

The Netherlands Institute for Care and Welfare (NIZW)

The Netherlands Institute for Care and Welfare is an independent organisation which targets innovation and improvement in the care and welfare sector. It provides information and support to professionals and many volunteers working in fields as varied as childcare, social services, community work, youth care, shelters, home care and services for people with a disability.

Netherlands Organisation for Voluntary organisations (NOV)

It is the task of NOV to ensure the recognition, appreciation and stimulation of volunteering in national and international perspective. NOV is an active member of the European Volunteer Centre and the International Association for Volunteer Work.

Dutch Foundation for Volunteer Management (sVM)

Together with the NOV, the Dutch Foundation for Volunteer Management (sVM) supports voluntary work. The mission of sVM aims to contribute to the innovation and improvement of voluntary work by initiating pilot projects, implementing newly gained knowledge and advising organisations which work with volunteers, governments and local welfare institutes in the field of organisational development, social participation, volunteer policy, quality care and diversity.

The projects developed by sVM and NOV¹³ follow the different programmes stated in the welfare policy and mainly focus on both the stimulation of social participation as well as on social activation. The programme of sVM/NOV targets both the formulation of (new) policy as well as on the development of new tools and work methods. sVM/NOV strive to cooperate with other relevant organisations in the development and execution of their programme.

Verwey-Jonker Institute

The Verwey-Jonker Institute has a specific task as a national independent centre for applied scientific research into social issues. It evaluates the policy and the methods and gains further insight from different perspectives, like clients, professionals, organisations, and policymakers. Its core mission is to improve the coping capacities of citizens and strengthen their societal position. Therefore, research into the positions and roles of other key actor categories, such as policy makers and professionals, is crucial. To ensure this mission, the Verwey-Jonker Institute has a basic programme subsidy from the Ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sports. However, more than half of its yearly budget comes from other sources at national and European levels. Some of the research domains covered by the institute are: city policies, gender issues, children at risk, volunteering, community care, citizens' participation, social exclusion, social development, community development, local social policy, social work, clients and consumers organisation in care and social welfare.

X-S2

In the light of strengthening cooperation between institutes on issues like social activation and social policy the national institutes have combined their experiences and have initiated a nationwide project for social policy: X-S2 (pronounce: access to). X-S2 is a digital portal open to everyone for information on social policy and all relating subjects. It forms a network to stimulate exchange of knowledge and good practices.

Professional organisations

Apart from the above mentioned national institutes, there is a range of professional (work) institutes active on social welfare in the Netherlands. Most institutes mainly have a platform function and represent a large number of smaller provincial or local welfare institutes. These professional institutes also contribute to the professionalisation and quality improvement of social welfare. They help to stimulate professional development of provincial or local institutes by providing training and education. Some receive subsidies for their work from the Dutch government; some operate on financial support of local councils, or by servicing the market.

In order to improve the quality of projects and assure nationwide accessibility of results government departments sometimes set up temporary institutes. One particularly institute is relevant in the light of social activation: the Information and Support centre Social Activation (ISSA). The Ministries of Public Health, Welfare and Sports (VWS) and Social Welfare and Work (SZW) set up ISSA for a period of two years (extended with one extra year). Its primary objective was to stimulate and support local councils and organisations in developing and implementing social activation. Amongst all the activities of ISSA, a special database was set up to provide a central location for good and bad practices. ISSA closely cooperates with national and regional welfare institutes on several projects.

¹³ NOV and sVM have decided to combine their forces. With this merger there will be one national supporting institute for voluntary work in the Netherlands. This will guarantee an improved level of clarity to all parties involved in voluntary work. Besides this, NOV and sVM will strengthen each other in different fields of expertise. The introduction of the new organisation is scheduled for the middle of 2003.

3. Voluntary work

Voluntary work in the Netherlands is described as “carrying out unpaid and un-obligatory activities in an organised context for the benefit of others or of society” (Govaart et al., 2001). In 2000, 37% of the Dutch population over 18 years volunteered at least once a year. A quarter of the population volunteered at least once a month (Van Daal & Plempers, 2001). Voluntary work is carried out in a large variety of organisations and areas. The voluntary activities are diverse and so are the volunteers. To mention only a few activities: fundraising, administration, lobbying, friendly visiting and being member of a board. These voluntary tasks are carried out in several areas, like health care, sports, education, and politics.

Voluntary work is highly important to many sectors of Dutch society. Recreational and sports activities would be fully impossible without the work of volunteers. Hospitals and nursing homes would not be able to provide the same quality of care to their clients without the assistance of volunteers. In some organisations, hundreds of volunteers offer their support everyday, thereby providing the continuity of care and services to the clients. Volunteering is not only very useful for individuals and society as a whole, it fulfils the needs of volunteers as well. It gives them satisfaction, social contacts with clients, professionals, other volunteers and the opportunity to gain experience and to develop capacities which may be useful in further life in society.

The government facilitates voluntary work by creating conditions and supporting voluntary work and social activation at local and regional level. Local authorities subsidise the activities of voluntary organisations and other organisations working with volunteers, based on the Welfare Act. They may also subsidise professional organisations to enable them to offer facilities to voluntary organisations, such as accommodation, professional and administrative support. In 2001, a national committee was installed to support local authorities in developing and strengthening the policy on volunteers.

The government encourages everyone to volunteer. In 1999, the National Assistance Act was amended: to a certain maximum premiums received for voluntary work will not affect the volunteer’s national assistance benefit. In addition, volunteers may be paid a tax-free fixed reimbursement for expenses. Since 1 January 2001, this payment amounts to € 900 per year.

Despite the fact that the Netherlands is a welfare state Dutch NGO’s and voluntary organisations still play a pivotal part in addressing important topics and thus influencing Dutch policymakers on new measures. Besides turning to one of the national organisations NGO’s could also turn to local authorities or try and lobby directly with political parties on a local or even national level in order for their topic to be heard.

4. The coalition of social inclusion and voluntary work

Volunteering is seen as a way to create a cohesive society and to prevent social exclusion. This refers not only the needs of the people who benefit of the volunteers and their work, but also to the needs of the potential volunteers. It serves the prevention of social isolation of both recipient and giver. In the nineties, the Dutch government embraced volunteering as a form of social participation and a way to accomplish integration and social awareness.

The introduction of volunteering as part of social activation for long term unemployed has already been mentioned in this paper. Migrants and newcomers were stimulated to perform voluntary work as well as a means to integrate.¹⁴ So were people with disabilities¹⁵ and ex-psychiatric patients.¹⁶

In the Dutch NAP, voluntary work is described as “an expression of solidarity and involvement, as the opposite of social exclusion”. There have been many successful examples of volunteering as a way to combat social exclusion. The first one was volunteering by women. In former days, married Dutch women were not allowed to join the paid work force. By performing voluntary activities, women could be useful to society, have social contacts, gain prestige, and pursue a career in volunteering. Later on, women used volunteering as a strategy to gain experience for the labour market. The gathering of women in voluntary organisations and self-help groups was very important for women’s liberation.¹⁷ Not only for women but also for many people, like migrants and people with disabilities, ‘identity based’ volunteering served as a means for liberation and empowerment.¹⁸ Recent research stresses the relevance of self-organisations of migrants for the development of social competences to survive in Dutch society.¹⁹ A self-organisation of (ex) homeless people in Amsterdam was launched to ensure that homeless people could help each other by developing ideas and initiating work experience projects for and by homeless people.²⁰

By volunteering people can combat the social exclusion of recipients as well. We already mentioned the diminishing social isolation when for instance an older person is visited by a volunteer. This is also true for the other mentioned groups who are at the risk of becoming socially excluded. The so-called ‘buddy-projects’ in which a volunteer operates as the buddy of a psychiatric patient, a patient who is chronically ill or a homeless person, also aims at stimulating the ‘socially excluded person’ to become more active and to participate in society. These buddies for instance accompany persons to the doctor but also in social and recreational activities, like a visit to a café or the zoo. The buddy-organisation for homeless people in Amsterdam soon developed a waiting list of clients.²¹ The visiting of delinquents in prison is also an example of keeping the vulnerable people connected to the society. At the moment, the Verwey-Jonker Institute performs a study into volunteering for and by people with a juridical background.

¹⁴ Van Daal & Broenink, 1998; Van Daal, 2002a.

¹⁵ NOV, sVM, Verwey-Jonker Instituut, 2002.

¹⁶ De Gier et al.,

¹⁷ Plemper, 1996.

¹⁸ Van Daal et al., 2001.

¹⁹ Van Daal, 2002.

²⁰ European Council, 2001.

²¹ Govaart et al., 2001.

5. Overview project examples

The matrix below provides a quick overview of the project that will be described in paragraph 7. All described projects touch upon the field of social exclusion and voluntary work, initiated by Dutch national organisations, voluntary organisations and local supporting institutes. The projects mainly serve as an illustration of all initiatives currently being undertaken in the Netherlands.

NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS	
<i>Long term unemployed</i>	
LCO	Sports and social activation.
NIZW/sVM	Certification: Recognition of voluntary work as a learning experience/process.
sVM	Manual activating voluntary work. Portfolio: new opportunities for phase 4 clients.
<i>Migrants</i>	
FORUM	Participation Moroccan Elderly
NOV	Asylum seekers: likely volunteers!
sVM	Language internship as instrument for integration
<i>Disabled</i>	
NIZW	Vrij Baan
NOV, sVM, Verwey-Jonker Institute	Voluntary work without barriers
NOV, sVM	Un-Limited@Work
sVM	Community Care
<i>Women</i>	
LCO	Mother Centres
LOCAL GOVERNMENT	
Deventer	The Turkish Elderly Project Deventer
Rotterdam	Unused Qualities (OK)
VOLUNTEER CENTRES	
Volunteer Centre Utrecht	Anders Actief (Differently Active)
Volunteer Centre Almere	Latent Talent
VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS	
The Netherlands Red Cross	Social Inclusion Project EQUAL
Humanitas	Weerwerk: Zorg waar je bij kunt (Care that you can reach)

6. Conclusions and discussion

Although by no means all initiatives are evaluated in this paper, it is clear that voluntary work can contribute significantly in activating people. However, research also shows how difficult it is to combat social exclusion by voluntary work. Inclusion by means of voluntary work is not always easy to achieve.

Voluntary work: ideal instrument?

Of all projects that are being carried out in the Netherlands in the light of social activation and integration in which voluntary work is used as activating instrument, most projects focus on the mediation of long term unemployed people to regular paid jobs. Social activation often concerns clients with a large distance to the labour market. For them voluntary work offers an ideal instrument for activation or a first step to paid work.

It is estimated that 20% of these Phase 4-clients find a place in voluntary work. Target groups with special needs like homeless, former delinquents, (ex-)drug addicts have been receiving less attention but are now the focus of policy.

Success story? Extra support and facilities are needed!

Voluntary organisations are not originally designed for social activation or volunteering by specific groups. People with a long distance to the paid labour market may need special support of the voluntary organisations and of colleague volunteers. A successful match between participant and voluntary organisation is not guaranteed. Participants often need more coaching than 'regular' volunteers do. In addition, for voluntary organisations it will initially entail more work. The organisation and other volunteers are not always equipped to give adequate support. This sometimes puts a heavy burden on the organisation.

Extra facilities are required to make an effective use of voluntary work as an activating instrument. For the participant, for example in the form of orientation and extra support and training in the field of basic social skills, and for voluntary organisations in the form of information, support and extra financial means.

Not every voluntary organisation or every voluntary activity is suitable for every volunteer. The voluntary organisations have to take into account the needs of the person whom they offer their support. People are often advised to volunteer by their practitioner or therapist. This does not always turn out to be the best solution for everyone.²²

Local government

To increase the likelihood of a successful placement of activating participants it is necessary that the local governments focus on increasing the accessibility of voluntary work. One of the ways to realise an improved accessibility is to offer (better) support to social services and supporting institutes, like the volunteer centre, to strengthen the effective use of voluntary work in social activation and integration of all relevant programmes.

A professional organisation of the mediating role is one of the first requirements for successful social activation. It seems the most obvious choice to place this role with the local voluntary centre. Larger voluntary centres are often already active in this area and have ample experience with target groups who are in need of special attention, for example disabled or newcomers.

²² Van Daal et al., 1992.

Prejudiced image

Research indicates that voluntary organisations and the volunteers themselves are not always open to candidate volunteers who differ from themselves. They form their own club of friends. This means an obstacle for people of different age, gender, background, and culture who would like to volunteer for a specific organisation.²³

Around the subject of social activation, there are still quite regularly prejudices. With many people and organisations, this prejudiced image often implies that social activation solely deals with 'difficult people'. When using voluntary work as an activating instrument some caution must be taken into account in order not to let this prejudice take over. Otherwise, this could make voluntary work unattractive to other groups.

Respect

Within many local communities in the Netherlands, voluntary work is used as a means to combat social exclusion by social activation and integration. Because many voluntary organisations currently state themselves that they have a shortage of volunteers and experience difficulty in reaching new recruits the match would appear to be easily made. However, voluntary work as an activating instrument has to be handled with care. In all circumstances, respect should be shown to the volunteer in order not to send him on the loose with an inappropriate task. And with respect for the typical character of voluntary work itself (voluntarily, unpaid).

²³ Plemper, 1999.

7. Project examples

This part describes projects on activating voluntary work, initiated by Dutch national organisations, voluntary organisations and local supporting institutes. We performed a quick scan under a number of organisations to gather some information of relevant projects. The described projects serve as an illustration of all the initiatives being undertaken in the field of social exclusion and voluntary work in the Netherlands. They do not represent a complete inventory of all projects and initiatives.

7.1 National organisations

Nearly all national institutes are active on the subject of social activation. Since sVM and NOV are primarily aimed at the Dutch voluntary sector, it is understood that these institutes initiate the majority of these projects.

7.1.1 Social activation

Long term unemployed

LCO
Sports and social activation
<i>Descriptive</i> The social activation policy mainly aims at the lower end of the labour market to target groups also referred to as 'difficult to mediate'. The sports sector, in a wide sense, offers all sorts of voluntary work, but also paid jobs, that can give this group the opportunity to find a useful way to spend their day.
<i>Objective</i> To stimulate social participation of long-term unemployed people by means of working or volunteering in the sports sector; to contribute to a solution for the shortage of volunteers in the sports sector and to strengthen the sports infrastructure.
<i>Working method</i> To carry out an initial research in order to identify which national, provincial and local organisations are involved in the stimulation of sports and social activation. What opportunities or bottlenecks occur by employing this group as volunteers in the sports sector.
<i>Output</i> Research report, expert meeting to gather recommendations for future policy aimed at stimulating sport and social activation, publication of good practices and recommendations, which will be distributed to policy makers and all parties concerned.
<i>Partners</i> Representatives of: Ministry of VWS, Ministry of Social Welfare, NOC*NSF, NISB, NCSU and voluntary centre Helmond.

NIZW, sVM
Certification: Recognition of voluntary work as a learning experience/process
<p><i>Descriptive</i></p> <p>The role of voluntary work in the development of skills or competence is being recognised more often, but formal acknowledgement of these competences is not available. Therefore, NIZW and sVM have set up a long-range plan in cooperation with the EVC-Knowledge Centre for the designing of an accessible and practical acknowledgement system for volunteers.</p>
<p><i>Objective</i></p> <p>An acknowledgement system will enable volunteers in the naming of their competences. Furthermore, it enables for volunteers the recognition, acknowledgement and rewarding of the gained competences in the shape of a certificate or diploma. This will help them to improve their labour market position or to work at their personal development.</p>
<p><i>Working method</i></p> <p>Research will be carried out to envisage the feasibility and desirability of such a system for volunteers.</p>
<p><i>Output</i></p> <p>Research report with recommendations for the composition of an expert panel; work conference, including the presentation of the final research report.</p>

sVM
Manual activating voluntary work
<p><i>Objective</i></p> <p>To provide voluntary organisations with a manual that will enable them to introduce and implement voluntary work as an activating instrument for participants of social activation aiming to stimulate social participation of long-term unemployed.</p>
<p><i>Target group</i></p> <p>Coaches and employees of voluntary organisations who would be willing to provide voluntary work to long-term unemployed people, employees of organisations who play a significant role in mediating long-term unemployed people towards social inclusion.</p>
<p><i>Output</i></p> <p>A manual: Phase 4-clients: new volunteers in your organisation? Frequently asked questions on the subject of social activation. The manual aims to increase the likelihood of a successful implementation of activating voluntary work for long-term unemployed people.</p>
<p><i>Partners</i></p> <p>Representatives of organisations mediating long-term unemployed people and representatives of voluntary organisations who would like to provide voluntary work to long-term unemployed people.</p>

sVM
Portfolio: new opportunities for phase 4 clients
<p><i>Background</i></p> <p>The portfolio method is a way to picture informal education, like voluntary work. The method has originally been developed in professional education and has been adjusted by sVM for use within voluntary organisations.</p>
<p><i>Descriptive</i></p> <p>Portfolio building, a method that helps people to reflect on different kinds of learning-experiences and raises awareness of qualities and competencies, is an ideal instrument to use in reintegration projects. sVM developed a special version of the portfolio for clients with a history of long-term unemployment. Most people need some form of coaching in getting through the task of portfolio building. Especially when it comes to reflecting on experiences and becoming aware of competencies.</p>
<p><i>Output</i></p> <p>The instrument was tested in five pilot projects involving about 50 clients, with a success rate far above average compared to similar projects. As a result of these pilot studies the following tools are now available: a standard portfolio for use in voluntary organisations, A portfolio for clients in reintegration projects, a training and manual for portfolio coaches.</p>
<p><i>Advantages</i></p> <p>Volunteers get new impulses in their volunteering career. They can choose well motivated towards a new step or direction and make use of the training resources of the organisation. It makes the organisations more attractive, especially for young volunteers or people who re-enter the labour market. The organisation will have a better knowledge of the qualities of the people they 'employ' whereby they might be able to make better use of them.</p>
<p><i>Good practices</i></p> <p>Participants are enthusiastic about the results, discovered new competencies, felt more confident and better prepared for job interviews.</p>

7.1.2 Social participation

Migrants

FORUM
Participation Moroccan Elderly: social activating migrant elderly people
<i>Background</i> In 2000 FORUM studied a number of projects that were aimed at social activating long term unemployed Moroccan men. Part of the methods appeared to be useful for other target groups as well. Based on the research report completed with conclusions from relevant literature and interviews FORUM, in cooperation with MEX-IT, will produce a methodology. This methodology will provide advice, suggestions as well as guidelines for the setting up, implementation, support and evaluation of activating programmes aimed at long term unemployed migrants.
<i>Objective</i> FORUM and MEX-IT like to provide a stimulus and a contribution to the social activation of long-term unemployed Moroccan elderly men.
<i>Working method</i> A theoretical component involving the writing of a research report that emphasises ways to improve social activation by gathering good practices of projects aimed at social participation by for example volunteering or a return to a regular job.
<i>Output</i> Research report with good practices of social activation activities like voluntary work, a methodology to improve social activation of long-term unemployed Moroccan elderly men, cooperation between social activation and organisations with interest or experience in societal entrepreneurship, a conference to present the results of at least two pilot projects.
<i>Partners</i> Two pilots in local governments.

NOV
Asylum seekers: Likely volunteers!
<p><i>Background</i></p> <p>Since 1997, it has officially been decided by national decree that asylum seekers are allowed to participate in voluntary organisations. The granting of this decree on itself proved to be insufficient. With the support of the Ministry of VWS, NOV has initiated a pilot project in Helmond.</p>
<p><i>Objective</i></p> <p>To contribute to a multicultural society by allowing asylum seekers to do voluntary work with social organisations in order to create a method that could be introduced nationwide.</p>
<p><i>Output</i></p> <p>Working manual to realise an effective mediation of asylum seekers to participate in voluntary work in the Netherlands.</p>
<p><i>Good practices Information to asylum seekers</i></p> <p>Inform asylum seekers of the ample possibilities of voluntary work in the Netherlands, indicate expectations for asylum seekers should they start voluntary work, clearly, specify conditions that should be met in order to apply for voluntary work outside the refugee centre, describe the profits of voluntary work for asylum seekers personally, provide support and advice in contacting voluntary centres to register for voluntary work, involve the asylum seeker personally with the information and development of promoting material.</p>
<p><i>Pilot Partners</i></p> <p>Helmond, Leeuwarden, Nijmegen, Kampen, and Delfzijl.</p>

sVM
Language internship as instrument for integration
<p><i>Background</i></p> <p>Based on the findings of the research 'Voluntary work, a change for integration' by the Verwey-Jonker Institute a 2 year project was set up in 2002.</p>
<p><i>Objective</i></p> <p>To improve the integration process by introducing language internship as a means to improve language skills and social participation through voluntary work. By doing so stimulate local authorities to integrate 'newcomers as volunteers' into their local voluntary policy and to inform voluntary organisations of the possibilities of language training.</p>
<p><i>Output</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good practices • complete existing methodology • Work conference on 'newcomers and voluntary work'
<p><i>Partners</i></p> <p>FORUM, Taskforce Integration, Stap Twee, VNG, Regional Education Centres and several organisations working with volunteers.</p>

Disabled people

NIZW
Vrij Baan
<i>Background</i> Access to voluntary work for the chronically ill and people with disabilities is not self-evident. In daily life, they stumble upon several practical barriers, such as costs of transport, possibilities to adjusting the working conditions.
<i>Objective</i> To provide an overview of answers to questions raised by volunteers as well as voluntary organisations and a survey of existing regulations and rules to improve accessibility to voluntary work for the target group. Profiles of would-be volunteers already point out some current possibilities or restrictions for this target group.
<i>Output</i> A work conference where the results of the project will be presented, a handbook for chronically ill and people with a disability to establish a better accessibility of voluntary work.

NOV, sVM, Verwey-Jonker Institute
Voluntary work without barriers
<i>Descriptive</i> In 1995 the volunteer centre in Utrecht started a mediation and support programme aimed at providing tailor made solutions for people with a physical disability trying to find voluntary work. In the beginning of 2000 the voluntary centres in Almelo, Breda and Nijmegen took over and each of them started a pilot project for the duration of one year. NOV played a supportive role in these projects and the Verwey-Jonker Institute closely monitored the projects and produced the written results. Mid 2000, sVM in cooperation with the voluntary centre Dordrecht closed the line of pilot projects. The lessons learned during the five above-mentioned pilot projects contributed towards this methodology.
<i>Objective</i> Improve the accessibility of voluntary organisations for people with physical disabilities who would like to take part in voluntary work.
<i>Output</i> A mediation and support methodology that will enable to coach people with a physical disability towards voluntary work, a brochure and manual for organisations willing to employ people with a physical disability as volunteers.
<i>Financing</i> VSB Fund, National Revalidation Fund, Ministry of VWS.

NOV, sVM
Un-Limited@Work
<p><i>Background</i></p> <p>Preceding research by NOV and sVM in the beginning of 2001 showed that the realisation of accessible voluntary work for people with a physical disability largely depends on the public support with volunteers and paid staff of voluntary organisations. At the end of 2001 NOV and sVM started a long range project aimed to stimulate voluntary work by people with a physical disability.</p>
<p><i>Objective</i></p> <p>Voluntary organisations are accessible for people with a physical disability who would like to volunteer, voluntary organisations consider people with a physical disability as a target group for recruiting and selecting new volunteers, voluntary organisations adequately use developed materials for support, voluntary organisations have established a network for exchanging experiences.</p>
<p><i>Activities</i></p> <p>To develop and distribute audiovisual material that introduces the potentials of people with a physical disability to voluntary organisations, to complete existing instruments in working with people with a physical disability (for example in supervision) and describe 'good practices' of successful implementation by voluntary organisations, to initiate a communication network for voluntary organisations where they can exchange experiences with volunteers with a physical disability.</p>
<p><i>Results</i></p> <p>A report including the following: overview of available materials for support, users manual for voluntary organisations (with good and bad practices and points of attention for voluntary organisations in working with volunteers with a physical disability); promotion material including a video, communication network.</p>
<p><i>Partners</i></p> <p>NIZW, CNV-younger people, CG-council.</p>
<p><i>Financing</i></p> <p>VSB Fund, Ministry of VWS.</p>

sVM
Community Care
<p><i>Background</i></p> <p>In 2001 sVM started a long-range project Community Care. Preceding research showed that voluntary work by people with a mental disability only takes place now and then in the Netherlands. However, voluntary work does offer possibilities to people with a disability to enlarge their social network. In 2002 sVM adjusted the existing methodology 'Guided work' based on the outcome of a monitor programme.</p>
<p><i>Objective</i></p> <p>To gain further insight in the knowledge and experiences to develop tailor made coaching and support, aimed at the efforts of persons with a mental disability as volunteer.</p>
<p><i>Working Method</i></p> <p>During the preparation in 2002, a project team and a workgroup are responsible for managing and implement the project. The fine tuned methodology will be tested in 2003 at two separate pilot locations. Each pilot will at least mediate four long-term unemployed persons to voluntary work.</p>
<p><i>Foreseen Output</i></p> <p>Inventory of the possibilities of voluntary work by mentally disabled persons, conditions (good practices) to which a voluntary organisation has to comply to when employing participants with a mental disability as a volunteer, a support and mediation methodology for persons with a mental disability fine-tuned to voluntary work. When proven successful the methodical description will be distributed at the end of 2003.</p>
<p><i>Pilot Partners</i></p> <p>Voluntary Centre Rotterdam (STAP), Social Pedagogical Service (R'go), Voluntary Centre Arnhem, and the Social Pedagogical Service (Philadelphia Foundation).</p>

Women

LCO
Mother Centres
<i>Descriptive</i> The project Mother Centres was initiated by the LCO in the mid nineties from a German initiative. Mother centres are multicultural neighbourhood based accommodations started by women on a basis of self-leadership and cooperation. Mother centres contribute to social cohesion and integration, and revitalise neighbourhoods as well as being a grassroots voice to local governance. Activities in the mother centres are initiated and supervised by the mothers themselves and cover a wide range: childcare, health care, care for the elderly, computer courses, nursing groups, peer counselling groups.
<i>Objective</i> Mother centres bring women and their families out of isolation and crisis and support them in rebuilding their confidence and ability to help themselves and each other. They empower women to participate in local governance, raising the issues of concern for families and communities.
<i>Role LCO</i> LCO introduced and implemented the mother centre concept, formed a national network of mother centres and support groups, offers support to the network, creates conditions for innovation, quality improvement, and reports about the developments to the Ministry of VWS.
<i>Output</i> A national network of mother centres, a training methodology 'women take charge' to develop, a work method 'Mother centres solid as a rock' to start a mother centre.
<i>Results</i> After a slow start, currently 25 mother centres take part in the national network.

7.2 Local government

7.2.1 Role of local government

Within many local governments large or small scale experiments with voluntary work as an activating instrument take place. The local governments have been granted a special subsidy for this purpose by the Ministry of VWS. Local governments are trying to realise their social activation targets by making use of voluntary work.

For a successful match the local government however depends on the cooperation of voluntary organisations. The local government could facilitate a mediating institute or buy separate activation programmes from this institute. The availability of a professional mediator to support social activation is of crucial importance. In the Netherlands the preceding preparations – information and intake of the participant and the searching for a voluntary work position – of social activation are all carried out by either the voluntary centre, the welfare institute or the local government itself. The mediating institute is responsible for the placement of participants, the (intensive) support of the participant, the evaluation and after care. Thus, the mediating institute plays a crucial and motivating role both towards the participant as well as to the voluntary organisation. However, the following should be taken into account when negotiating this mediating role:

- the professional role in mediating special target groups is of a satisfactory level and available;
- approachable and accessible for the target group, including immigrants;
- short lines with other relevant social activation institutes;
- mediation to voluntary work based on a professional basis and intake;
- clear agreements between council as 'buyer' and the mediating institute as 'presenter' concerning the selection of participants, results to be achieved, financing, and tasks.

Local governments, in their role as directors and facilitators, play a pivotal part in strengthening public support, in facilitating a professional intermediate function and in embedding voluntary work in the whole of the instruments available for activation. Only then activating voluntary work can come to its full expression. For the client this means a meaningful daily life and new perspectives. For organisations, it means more human resources, new points of view and new target groups.

7.2.2 Projects

Deventer
The Turkish Elderly Project Deventer
<p><i>Background</i></p> <p>The city council initiated the Turkish Elderly Project (TOP) in 1998. The project is meant to stimulate participants to actively take part in the Dutch society as well as in their local Turkish community by means of an educational programme and/or voluntary work.</p>
<p><i>Objective</i></p> <p>Primary target is to stimulate the large group of Turkish elderly people (40 years and older) to participate in society.</p>
<p><i>Activities</i></p> <p>Intake to clarify the possibilities, impossibilities and wishes of participants, voluntary work with extra individual support. Participants are encouraged to arrange as much as possible by themselves; visits to local education, care and welfare institutions to improve their knowledge of Dutch society; involve participants in identifying and solving problems with youngsters.</p>
<p><i>Results</i></p> <p>Many participants eventually found voluntary work. In March 1999 the project started with 8 male participants. On 1 July 2001 a total of 90 Turkish men and women participated in the TOP project. On average participants spend 8 hours a week working as a volunteer.</p>

Rotterdam
Unused Qualities (OK)
<p><i>Background</i></p> <p>People who have been unemployed for a long time often experience 'not to be a part of society anymore' or 'not capable of doing anything'. They tend to isolate themselves increasingly and are subject to losing self-esteem and respect. Helping these people to become active and to involve them in society could also be described as social activation. In Rotterdam, they call it 'Unused Qualities'. This project started in 1995 when the city was experiencing high unemployment.</p>
<p><i>Method</i></p> <p>OK mediates to voluntary work in all different shapes and sizes, in nursing homes and sports facilities, but also with cultural institutes or the animal ambulance.</p>
<p><i>Results</i></p> <p>In 2001, more than 4900 people have participated in the OK project. At the beginning of 2002 3495 were actively involved which brings the total number of participants over a period of 6 years to 8500 participants. Even though the project does not strive to mediate participants to 'regular' jobs or education, approximately one out of four manages to find a job or education.</p>

7.3 Volunteer centres

7.3.1 Role of Volunteer centres

During the last few years other parties involved in the voluntary sector have been experimenting with social activation, for instance volunteer centres.

In the Netherlands, there are several types of volunteer centres. At the end of 2001, approximately 30 of the 160 local volunteer centres were involved in social activation.²⁴ Especially the larger ones often already play an active role in the light of social activation and have experience in mediating specific target groups, for instance newcomers or former psychiatric patients. These specific groups of people showed initiative in finding other ways than a regular job to remain socially active. However, it appeared that these people needed intensive support and mediation. With this insight information, some volunteer centres took the initiative to address the city council and explore the possibilities of starting special projects. In many local social activation projects, the volunteer centre plays a pivotal part in the mediation of the participant and supporting the voluntary organisations with realising a successful placement.

7.3.2 Projects

Volunteer Centre Utrecht
Anders Actief (Differently active)
<i>Descriptive</i> The new Welfare Act gives social activation a new meaning. The local council specifically lays down the core of the new approach on social activation in a decree that states that those people who receive benefit should also be enabled to participate in attractive, challenging and motivating activities that foresee in a societal need or provide other positive reasons.
<i>Activities</i> This project is carried out by the volunteer centre in close cooperation with ten local welfare institutes and a training centre. Besides mediating participants towards voluntary work, this project aims to improve the skills of the participants as well by offering the participants special training programmes.
<i>Results</i> In 2000, 319 people joined the project. 31% had a migrant background. 46 dropped out of the project. Since March 2000 the project 'Disabled and voluntary work' takes part in this project with the general objective to stimulate participation of people with a physical disability in volunteering.

^sSVM, Van den Bosch & Hofman, 2002.

Volunteer Centre Almere
Latent Talent
<p><i>Background</i></p> <p>In the mid nineties the Volunteer Centre in Almere noticed that people on social security benefit informed about possibilities to volunteer. The voluntary centre addressed the city council. Together they initiated the project to activate long term unemployed by using voluntary work. The project started in May 1998 and will run until January 2003.</p>
<p><i>Objective</i></p> <p>The primary target of the project is to prevent social exclusion. Both the Voluntary Centre and the city council try to increase the skills of the participants.</p>
<p><i>Working method/Activities</i></p> <p>The voluntary centre is in charge of the project, the city council provides the financial support. Participation in the project should be voluntarily. This creates a setting in which there is ample attention for personal motivation, needs and wishes. Before participating in voluntary work, the participants will have to sign a contract with a maximum time limit of 2 years. During this period, they will be exempted of application requirements and will receive a small financial bonus.</p>
<p><i>Results</i></p> <p>From May 1998 up to December 2000 95 persons participated in the project. Approximately 22% still participate in voluntary work. 17% has actually been successfully coached to a paid job. The project mainly offers voluntary work at nursing homes. Mentors were initially also volunteers, but it proved to be difficult to maintain a relationship based on equality between participants and their mentors. Since 2000 a professional mentor was hired.</p>

7.4 Voluntary organisations

7.4.1 Role of voluntary organisations

Voluntary organisations who would like to receive participants of social activation do not directly depend upon other parties. Some of them do not have a direct subsidiary relationship with local authorities and many of their volunteers become active without the help of service institutions.

The below mentioned factors determine whether social activation will be successful or not in a voluntary organisation:

- there is broad support within the organisation;
- activities must meet the participants' interests;
- method and order in the work;
- clear definitions of responsibilities and tasks that are not too large;
- demarcation of the working hours;
- agree on a minimum amount of working hours;
- good coaching on the job.

Organisations that work with volunteers vary from small scale self-help-organisations to large institutions. Almost all of them can use extra manpower. Furthermore, many organisations try to broaden their base in society and connect better to the multicultural society. Their commitment to social activation is often prompted by their social responsibility or hope of finding and reaching a new potential of volunteers. The influx of participants of social activation can contribute to achieving these goals, but demands an investment at the beginning. This is not easy to realise for every organisation. Some projects initiated by voluntary organisations are described below. The sequence of the projects does not imply any priority or importance.

Precision work

Social activation must be precision work. A voluntary organisation should continue to watch if tasks still meet the specific needs and skills of the participant. Also guiding the organisations itself is precision work.

Specify Needs

The person guiding the organisation can only offer this precision work if the organisation itself clearly indicates what it needs. This is especially of great importance since there are large differences between voluntary organisations. The clearer an organisation can indicate its needs, the better the person guiding them can anticipate and support them.

Permanent contact

Provide one permanent contact person within the organisation for the participants. With social activation, it is necessary that voluntary organisations have volunteers (or professionals) who can guide the 'new volunteer' on the job and maintain contact with the mediating organisation.

More than one client

Placing more clients within the same organisation can have a positive effect, the participants support each other. However experiments have proven that for voluntary organisations it is not easy to guide more than three participants at the same time.

sVM, Bosch et al, 2002

7.4.2 The Netherlands Red Cross

The Netherlands Red Cross has wide experience with volunteers and the development of products for this group. It provides different kinds of social welfare activities and is familiar with helping and working with people in various vulnerable situations. The

primary aim of the Red Cross is the empowerment of these groups through training, counselling and work experience leading to their permanent employment in the future. Target groups of the Netherlands Red Cross are immigrants, gypsies, women, young unemployed, people with disabilities, long-term unemployed, former drug users and people with special needs.

In 1997, the Netherlands Red Cross together with two other Dutch voluntary organisations (Humanitas and the SSVH) started a research project to examine the possibilities for voluntary organisations to participate in social inclusion.

Netherlands Red Cross (NRC)
Social Inclusion
<p><i>Background</i></p> <p>In January 2000, the NRC started this project to continue building on existing experiences. More people must be offered, through precision voluntary work, the opportunity to work at a more active life, with new people, more daily routine and eventually a growing confidence and more positive self-image.</p>
<p><i>Objective</i></p> <p>Explore whether social activation in the end should get a place as development task within the total assistance package to people in vulnerable situations. Goal of the project is to stimulate local departments to start projects in the area of social activation.</p>
<p><i>Output</i></p> <p>Systematic guideline and support plan for local departments, meetings centred around one theme, knowledge centre for local departments.</p>
<p><i>Partners</i></p> <p>Voluntary Centre Utrecht, Refugee centre Utrecht.</p>
<p><i>Examples of volunteer activities</i></p> <p>Refugees teach first aid to children in primary education, former social security mother visits needy lady, (ex)-psychiatric patient supports recreational activities, and a man with a disability is responsible for answering the telephone and is active for the local department magazine.</p>

Netherlands Red Cross
Project EQUAL
<p><i>Background</i></p> <p>In the light of the European project 'EQUAL', the Netherlands Red Cross currently investigates whether social activation could be introduced in their organisation. The project intends to stimulate participants of social activation to return to a paid job through the experiences gained by doing voluntary work.</p>
<p><i>Objective</i></p> <p>Social reactivation of long term unemployed and people on incapacity benefit with the help of voluntary work. Parallel with this the project aims to develop a coherent methodical description of the use of voluntary work in social reactivation in order to set up similar projects in the Red Cross communities all over the Netherlands.</p>
<p><i>Working method</i></p> <p>The project will be tested at three different pilot locations: ICT activities in an internet café, located in a care centre in Nieuwe Niedorp; work in the garden of Mappa Mondo Haaglanden (home for terminal ill children); hotel and catering work at the care hotel in Rheden.</p>
<p><i>Output</i></p> <p>Methodical description of the work method, training and education programme for Red Cross volunteers and coaches.</p>
<p><i>Partners</i></p> <p>Council Social Service, reintegration agencies and local pilot organisations.</p>

7.4.3 Humanitas

The present society houses certain groups who are in danger, due to several circumstances of becoming socially excluded. Humanitas tries to prevent exclusion by organising several forms of personal support, like buddies. The services of Humanitas are characterised by mutual respect, social equality and reciprocity. The organisation aims to recognise social needs and to act in developing activities that strive to be innovative and accessible.

In 1995 Humanitas was one of the three initiating voluntary organisations of the project 'social activation in voluntary care, chance of success?' Currently the organisation executes a number of small local activating volunteer projects. Support and coaching of participants of social activation requires extra time than the support of 'regular' volunteers. The extra support is not available at all local branches.

Successful pilot projects from the above mentioned research support and either the voluntary centre or another local council social institute provided personal coaching. Local councils would provide the financial means to enable this structure. Some small initiatives prove to be very successful, as for example the project that is described below.

Humanitas Amsterdam
Weerwerk: Zorg waar je bij kunt
<p><i>Background</i></p> <p>Already in 1994 Humanitas started examining the possibilities for the organisation to play a role in finding solutions to the long term unemployment problem. During that time the idea arose to involve long term unemployed people in voluntary work. In cooperation with an employee of the city council social service the pilot project 'Weerwerk' was started. Since then, this project has developed into an important activity for Humanitas.</p>
<p><i>Objective</i></p> <p>To stimulate people out of social exclusion and helping long-term unemployed people to strengthening their self-confidence and feeling of self-esteem. To offer them a chance to take part in society by offering mediation and support. Starting point is to encourage long term unemployed to actively take part in society and in doing so improve their quality of life.</p>
<p><i>Working method</i></p> <p>Initially the focus was on mediating and supporting long-term unemployed to voluntary work. During the past years Humanitas has set up an extensive network of organisations that work with volunteers. Participants have a personal 'coach' at Humanitas who also serve as contact for organisations. Next to mediating towards voluntary work, Humanitas also offers support to the participant in identifying wishes and needs concerning possible 'regular work', or support in applying for work and finding a suitable job.</p>
<p><i>Results</i></p> <p>Almost 90% of all participants in this projects have been placed as a volunteer.</p>

APPENDIX I Framework for local government to facilitate activating voluntary work

This framework provides councils with a broad description of the steps necessary to be taken in order to organise activating voluntary work in their own community. A marginal comment, however, is that policy in the field of activating voluntary work should not be developed separately from other already existing municipal policies but should be imbedded in for example voluntary work policy or social activation policy.

Step 1 Formulating a starting memo

In the light of activating voluntary work, the first step is to formulate a vision and objective and set up a starting memo against the background of social activation, possibly as part of the volunteer policy and the definition of the target group. Important part of this memo should be an inventory of the current local situation.

Step 2 Testing in the local community

A broad testing of the starting document provides insight into the possibilities to realise the intended policy. Moreover, it clearly demonstrates the willingness of organisations and institutes to cooperate in this policy and the necessary preconditions.

Step 3 Formulating definite policy

After discussions with organisations from the local community, the starting memo is adjusted and written down in official policy. Important part in this will be the definition of instruments to be used to realise objectives set.

Step 4 Implementing and monitoring

During the implementation, it is very important to maintain effective communication with all parties involved. Both in order to continue to motivate involved parties as well as to monitor and control progress.

Step 5 Evaluation and adjustment

Systematic analyses of the gathered data will provide an overview of points of success and failure in activating voluntary work. If necessary, based on these data the local council can on basis could re-adjust the policy on activating voluntary work.

Voluntary organisations are indispensable in the social safety net of the Dutch society. Sometimes as pioneer, sometimes in close cooperation with local and provincial authorities. Local voluntary work has an important task in social activation.

Checklist activation place

- volunteer activities take place during the day;
- there is an atmosphere in which the clients feel welcomed;
- there is little stress;
- the tasks and work place are well organised;
- there are possibilities to gradually extend the activities and tasks of the participant;
- there is on the job support;
- a separate coach at a distance monitors the participant and the broad outlines.

sVM, Bosch et al (2002)

APPENDIX II Framework Starting social activation for voluntary organisations

1. Create internal and public support

Contact the local authority to find out what role social activation plays within the local community and which parties are involved in it. Social activation cannot succeed without a broad support within the organisation of the goals and plans. Discuss in an early stage with all parties in the organisation the way in which you want to implement social activation and discuss the consequences.

2. Offer a workplace and the preparation of it

Contact the mediation organisation. Determine in which way social activation can be implemented within the organisation. Can it be part of the regular activities or is it better to set up a separate social activation project?

3. Determine the tasks

Determine which tasks the participants can fulfil within the organisation. Keep in mind the interests of the participant, a systematic introduction to the work (participating in group activities for a period can be a good start), method and order in the work, clear definitions of tasks and working hours. Be open for input of present volunteers, what do they think about it?

4. On the job support and coaching

The mediating institution will take care of the intensive coaching of the participant. In addition, during the voluntary work the participant needs guiding. Make sure they have a contact person for questions, stimulate the participant and check how it is going.

5. Feedback to mediating organisation

Make sure there is regular contact with the mediating institution. Indicate what is going well and discuss what is not going well. Ask the mediating institution how to deal with possible problems. Evaluate after the project with both the mediating institution and the participant and discuss which adjustments might be necessary for future participants.

It is important to make sure the role of the voluntary organisations in this project is achievable. This means that the voluntary organisation primarily focuses on offering a work place to people who want to start voluntary work within the framework of social activation.

APPENDIX III

Return on investment?²⁵

On average, taking in social activation clients costs organisations more effort than working with regular volunteers. What does an organisation get in return for this investment?

New volunteers

Many organisations desperately need new volunteers. Through social activation, they get people who – once at the right spot with the right guidance – do not function less on the work floor as other volunteers.

Precision work

In voluntary work, there is increasingly a demand for precision work. The experience that an organization gains by offering precision work to a social activation client will help in offering precision work to other target groups like young people.

Personal satisfaction

Volunteer coordinators and other people involved often see it as a personal challenge to find a spot for persons difficult to place. To slowly see someone flourish gives great satisfaction.

Social responsibility

The satisfaction that as an organisation you are living up to your social responsibilities.

Goodwill

Cooperating in social activation can achieve goodwill and give the organisation a social face in the eyes of the local community.

Eye-opener

Working with a new target group gives you new insights and a fresh approach to what you are doing as an organisation. In this way, the organisation can reach a target group to whom they normally do not have easy access.

Experiences from participants in social activation

"A world has opened up to me!"

"Why hasn't any one told me before that this was possible?"

"I am worth more than I thought I was"

"I am more independent and have gained more self confidence"

²⁵ sVM, Bosch et al (2002)

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