

Generalist Youth Information Services in the Netherlands in 1997

The attached pages constitute the chapter concerning the **Netherlands** which is part of a 17-country study completed in 1997.

Each chapter provides a summary of the situation in the country at the end of 1997 concerning generalist youth information and counselling, and the methods and structures involved in its organisation and distribution.

This study was conducted by the **European Youth Information and Counselling Agency** (ERYICA), to which all the author organisations belong as “Member Organisations” or as “Co-operating Organisations”. Accordingly, the study is limited to those countries where in 1996-97 there existed functioning networks of generalist youth information centres and services which were co-operating with ERYICA.

The 17 chapters of this study, in separate English and French versions, can be consulted on the ERYICA Internet site (“www.eryica.org” - see the section “Documents”, then “1997 Study”). Each file, which is in Word 2.0 for Windows / PC (varying between 4 and 20 pages in length), can also be downloaded from the site.

More recent information about each ERYICA national partner, its activities and its network can also be found on the ERYICA Internet site:

- a) **current addresses of national partners**: under “Discover ERYICA”, then “Members”, then “Country”;
- b) **links to Internet sites of national partners**: under “Discover SERVICES”, then “Websites of ERYICA Partners”;
- c) (when the organisation co-ordinates a network) **link to a list of addresses of regional or local centres**: under “Discover ERYICA”, then “Members”, then “Country”.

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NETHERLANDS

INTRODUCTION

During the last decade there have been many developments in the field of youth information in the Netherlands. These start-ed after the **first European Seminar on Youth Information** held in Marly-le-Roi (France) in April 1985, proclaimed as Inter-national Youth Year by the United Nations. A group of Dutch youth experts took home from the seminar a lot of inspiration and ideas. The production of an information booklet for young people, called "16 or So", based on the similar "Young Scot" booklet, was the first nation-wide activity in 1986.

Since that time, all kinds of initiatives in the area of youth information have been taken at the national, regional and local levels in the Netherlands.

In general, the intention to inform young people about their possibilities and about laws and regulations, is based on some general notions and developments:

- * modern society operates more and more as an 'information society'. Information seems to be vital for successful participation. On the other hand, society and its regulations are changing fast and becoming more complex;
- * pedagogical ideas are changing concerning the lives of young people: young people are no longer only future adults growing towards independence and responsibility, but 'being young' is considered as a stage of life in itself. This goes together with a lot of pressure to make individual decisions about one's education and future employment;

- * information is available for young people but it is often hard to find, its quality varies and sometimes there is just too much information from different sources.

It is interesting to note that ideas coming from other countries have inspired and influenced developments in the Netherlands. On the other hand, projects and initiatives in the Netherlands have been an inspiration to other countries.

At the present time there are around 150 Youth Information Centres and Points in the Netherlands.

HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT

Youth information became part of central government policy through the Ministry of Welfare, Health and Cultural Affairs (now Health, Welfare and Sport) around 1988. The **Stichting Jeugdinformatie Nederland** (formerly JWI) received the assignment to bring more clarity and coherence in the

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supply of information for young people, and to support professionals who have an informational task towards young people. These professionals work in existing organisations for youth help and youth work, and 'information' is an integral part of their job.

In the Netherlands, the processes of decent-ralisation, regionalisation and the increasing level of provision, particularly in the field of child care, have caused a rapid develop-ment of youth information as a separate work form. In particular, the **Youth Ad-vice Centres** (JAC), which already had an information function, started to focus more and more on this part of their work. Many Youth Advice Centres merged into larger organisations and, often, this went hand in hand with a more functional division of the organisation. Information and advice have been separated from welfare activities, and many Youth Advice Centres have been converted into Youth Information Points, i.e. places where young people can go for information. Youth Information Points are well suited to carry out the task of prevention. They are general facilities accessible to large groups of young people who, if necessary, can be referred quickly and efficiently to a specialised service or to another relevant welfare institution.

In the spring of 1990, the first **Youth Information Point** (JIP, as they are often called) was opened in Tilburg, as an example of how youth information services would be developed in different parts of the country. JIP-Tilburg is devised as a shop with information materials and other professional services for young people.

Since 1990, a considerable number of JIPs have been established in different forms and settings, such as:

- youth information shops
- youth information bureaux
- youth information points

- youth information busses
- youth information projects
- youth information activities.

NATIONAL RESEARCH ON YOUTH INFORMATION

During 1993 and 1994, the University of Leiden undertook a national study concern-ing both the supply of, and the demand for, youth information.

The extensive research programme organis-ed in the framework of this study targeted both intermediaries and young people themselves, and provided considerable support for the development of youth information work at this time. As a result of this research, a good overview was obtained of the kind of questions which young people actually pose, and of the strategy that they follow when looking for information.

The research amongst intermediaries (people working for and with young people) showed that they were very well aware of what kind of information young people need.

As a result of the study conducted by the University of Leiden, a treasure-trove of information became available. Some find-ings of the survey were surprising and may be of interest outside the Netherlands. For example, the assumption that young people with low educational qualifications would not be interested in information was firmly contradicted by the research. It has become clear that these young people have many comments on the way in which information is offered to them. Too often there is the idea that youth information consists of handing the relevant leaflet to the young person, when the important part of the process is the contact and guidance which accompanies the information.

OBJECTIVES OF YOUTH INFORMATION

The differences between JIPs are still quite important; some are very professional, others work with volunteers only; some are located in a nice shop in the centre of the town, others have a small room in a youth centre. Nevertheless they all have the same objective: to inform young people about all subjects which are of interest to them. Besides problem-oriented information, in most JIPs there is information about studies, travelling, leisure activities and so on. In some JIPs specialised services are organised in areas such as job-hunting, accommodation and the renting of bicycles.

At this time JIPs are developing towards being a local transfer-point in the field of information for and about youth. Local organisations feel the need for better co-operation between all sectors in the area of working with youth; they want to know which problems occur and how they can be prevented. Local governments support this development with their local integrated youth policies. Also the recent tendency of involving young people themselves in policy discussions, and in the execution and evaluation of the work, is strongly supported by the local governments.

ORGANISATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR YOUTH INFORMATION

Most Youth Information Points in the Netherlands are part of bigger organisations for youth care and youth work, and they are located in places frequented by young people. These structures have been decentralised to the regional and local level. The Youth Information Points are not yet evenly spread over the country; the West-ern part of the country has considerably more information points than the North, for example. The quality of the facilities, the expertise and professionalism

of the work-ers, and the accessibility of the Youth Information Points are not the same everywhere either. Networking with other services is also more successful in some towns than in others. In several municipalities, economy measures have led various institutions to combine together to administer Youth Information Points. In this sense, youth information has proved to be a good area for co-operation in the process of reforming social services.

A complicating factor, however, is that the Youth Information Points are established by very different social institutions, and therefore have quite different organisational frameworks. Different models are used, with their own characteristics and limitations. Approximately two-thirds of the Youth Information Points are connected with child-care structures, almost a third with youth work structures and some are part of public libraries. The very few Youth Information Points which are located in schools often consist of no more than a stand with leaflets, and possibly a pre-determined time when an information worker from a Youth Information Point is present and can be consulted.

Youth Information Points are structures which are close to the people they work for but there is no formal system of national co-ordination. In the field of youth information, the Stichting Jeugdinformatie Nederland (SJN) provides support by producing information materials for youngsters and intermediaries, by advising new youth information initiatives, and by developing professional training programmes.

PROMOTING QUALITY IN YOUTH INFORMATION WORK

In 1992, a national youth information logo was introduced and together with the European Youth Information Charter

(adopted by ERYICA in 1993), this constitutes the basis for minimal standards and quality criteria for youth information work in the Netherlands.

A **national steering-group on youth information**, consisting of 12 regional and metro-politan youth information services, is working on the implementation of minimal standards for youth information. In addition, this group focuses on the co-ordination of national and regional activities, on co-ordination between regions concerning products and the distribution of those products, on the national co-ordination of registration systems, on joint promotion activities and on the representation of common interests.

The **national youth information logo** was designed so that young people could more easily recognise the information points. The logo is only used by Youth Information Points that meet certain basic criteria. A Youth Information Point has to be easily accessible for all young people, without distinction based on gender, social or ethnic origin, etc. In addition, a varied supply of information has to be available on a wide range of topics. Eventually, the logo may serve as indication of quality, which would give young people the guarantee that the information and advice they receive is complete, reliable, impartial and tailored to their needs.

Recent SJN Products

Information Materials

- Catalogue of youth information leaflets produced by different sources

Training Courses

- How to create a Youth Information service
- Methodology of face-to-face information work with young people
- Laws and regulations relating to young people

Multimedia & Internet

- DWINK web-site on youth participation: www.sjn.nl/dwink
- "Health All Around" CD-ROM
- "16 or So" on Internet: www.sjn.nl/16ofzo
- SJN home-page: www.sjn.nl

Promotional Materials

- Video on how to find youth information
- Stickers, bags, etc. with national youth information logo