

Inter-cultural elderly care and social care in The Hague

To the City Council of The Hague, inter-cultural care is not a strange or new phenomenon. In the past 25 years a lot has happened in this field. Several organizations to do with elderly care have already formulated policies in order to also serve the new residents of The Hague. And yet, it is still not generally accepted and that has been the Council's incentive to prominently put this item on the agenda. Not just talk this time, but act and thereby very clearly work towards changing care giving institutions into culture sensitive organizations. Not just to new clients, but to also unite all employees on all levels and of all cultural backgrounds.

With this initiative, the Council is demonstrating leadership and at the same time makes an appeal to managers of various organizations, be it private or government institutions, for a similar type of leadership. The whole process is supported by Jan Booij Advies.

It has to be obvious, or be made obvious to organizations that it concerns strategic choices here which will have to be made on all business aspects. Managers are aware of the fact that if they do not specifically pay attention to making their organizations culture sensitive, they will miss the boat. Clients who are not Dutch by birth have been here a long time with many more to come, demographic data is crystal-clear. They are entitled to care which is in keeping with their needs and wishes, even if these are religious or otherwise have a cultural background.

The number of different ethnic groups in the City of The Hague is extensive and this fact alone makes the organizing of care for just one ethnic group unfeasible and also undesirable. After all, it is about The Hague people no matter where he or she was born.

Sometimes, however, it may be necessary to take an ethnic origin as a starting point for offering care, possibly starting with the eldest of the very first generation who do not master the Dutch language (anymore) and emotionally withdraw into their own culture.

The Council has made the strategic choice to make care and the provision of services commonly available. In order to realize this, it is necessary for all care givers to offer culturally sensitive care.

The second most important subject is the make up of personnel in care and public welfare. At this moment this is no reflection of the population of The Hague. We do not see many allochthonous people in, specifically, managerial positions. In order to find and keep 2nd and 3rd generation youngsters, it is absolutely necessary for organizations to be attractive employers for a very diverse group of staff members. All HRM agents can be made intercultural and can be made use of.

The start of this process was made in the second half of 2009 by talking to more than 30 people about the concept of inter-culturalisation. The majority of these 30 people is manager of a care institution, private or public welfare institutions. Talks were also held with ethnic pressure groups and (potential) clients. They were very captivating and honest talks whereby everyone was aware of the urgency of inter-culturalisation of their respective organizations in all business aspects. It is not a choice, but an ethnic necessity.

It also came to light that it is not always that easy to raise any particular subject above isolated projects and to integrate same into the daily running of an institution. It is never fast enough for pressure groups, they sometimes feel as if they have been asking for attention for a long time and still it does not work out, though they do see some practical examples of change.



The outcome of these talks was published in book¹ form and presented as such to all participants to serve as input for a work conference with all those involved. Objective of the work conference was to unite forces and set a new course for the coming four years and no longer feel free of obligations.

The Council wants to facilitate this process of inter-culturalisation of elderly care, but organizations will have to do this themselves.

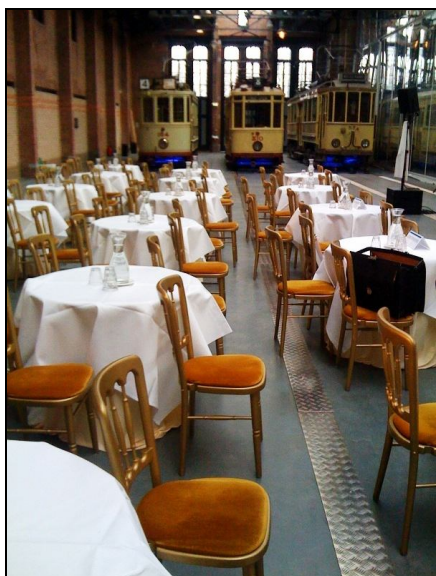
Through some sort of covenant or alliance, various organizations as well as pressure groups commit themselves to achieve this by all means and efforts possible. That may vary for individual organizations, but the end result must be that after four years there is specific inter-cultural elderly care in the City of The Hague.

The whole process is monitored through their own internal audits and specifically aimed at inter-cultural subjects relating to all business policies. A team consisting of a number of managers will push on and be a feedback group for all participating organizations. The Council will take main control.

¹ Bijzonder Dichtbij, weergave van 33 gesprekken



During the final conference, a book² was published containing information such as interviews, the history of 25 years of inter-culturalisation, demographic details and plans for the future. This way, the whole process will become transferable to other organizations or councils



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² Bijzonder Dichtbij, Den Haag cultuursensitieve stad