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Netherlands centre  
for social development

## Pink seniors

**In 2001, civil same-sex marriages were legalized in the Netherlands. This seemed to be the crown on LGBT emancipation. Now, we know that emancipation is still necessary. This factsheet is about homosexual, bisexual and lesbian citizens of fifty years and over. Research shows that often they are not able to lead the life they want. Here are some measures we've employed in the Netherlands to improve their situation.**

The gay and lesbian community in the Netherlands includes approximately 150.000 men and women of 65 and older and 38.000 over 80 years of age. Most of them live in one of the larger cities in the west of the Netherlands (Randstad). What problems do they face?

- They run a great risk of becoming socially isolated and lonely. Often, they lack a social network of friends and family.
- As they are less mobile it is harder for pink seniors to meet like-minded people. This increases their possible isolation and loneliness.
- If pink seniors find themselves in a dependency situation, like in a nursing home, they may choose to hide their sexual preference for fear of rejection or isolation.

### **Gay/straight-alliance**

To improve the situation of pink seniors in the Netherlands, four national organizations have joined forces. In 2006, the *Consortium Roze 50+ Nederland* was born. The Consortium is a so-called gay/straight alliance. This combination of LGBT and mainstream organizations represents an important breakthrough. The four organizations are: COC Nederland (advocacy group for LGBT's), Schorer (organization for LGBT health issues), MOVISIE (social development centre) and ANBO (national seniors association). The biggest benefit is in the participation of the latter party: meaning that a large, national trade union for senior people (400.000 members) is integrating the gay element in its activities and statements.

### **Visibility**

Over the past years, a lot of improvement has been made. LGBT persons over 50 have become more visible thanks to numerous activities, like:

- The 50 + fair: a major information fair for senior citizens, which attracts nearly 100.000 visitors, yearly. The past few years, a full stand has been dedicated to information on Pink seniors.
- Amsterdam Gay Pride: the yearly large-scale gay-manifestation in the Netherlands. Pink seniors are very visible on a boat on the Pink 50+ Consortium.

### **Knowledge, information, contact**

To effectively inform and educate the public as well as to enable regular contact between pink seniors, the Consortium maintains a website, [www.roze50plus.nl](http://www.roze50plus.nl). Here, information, reports and a listing of (regional) activities are published. In addition, the site offers a chat-function for pink seniors.

### **Pink ambassadors**

'Pink ambassadors' are active throughout the country. Most of them are pink seniors from the heart of the community in their city or region. They coordinate regional and local events and contribute to the website content. They are also the eyes and ears of the Consortium, as they recognize problems and trends among the target group. The pink ambassadors are trained to share their stories, in the media, with other organizations for seniors, and otherwise.

### **Professional training**

In the Netherlands, training programmes and information are available to educate organizations on the subject of pink seniors and to enhance expertise. Professionals, policy makers and managers are increasingly aware of the needs of this particular group. It is important that professionals who work directly with senior people, like staff of residential facilities, are trained as well.

### **At home: Tolerance scan and the pink passkey**

It is very important for pink seniors to live in a safe environment, surrounded by care-givers who are aware of their special needs. The *Tolerance scan* is a tool to assess care facilities. The questionnaire reveals what care residencies do (or fail to do) for their gay and lesbian residents, and whether their needs are met. The results will help facilities to optimize their LGBT policy. Care facilities with an effective pink policy will receive the Pink Passkey, a symbolic pink key.

### **Pink-a-ton**

In 2006 and 2011 living conditions, opportunities, needs and problems of pink seniors in the Netherlands were recorded during a Pink Phone-in week. The information collected during these two Pink phone weeks was published in the *Groenboek* (Green paper) This paper is a starting point for policy makers. Politicians and care homes executives may adjust their policy accordingly.

#### **Tips and tricks**

- Join forces with gay/straight alliances.
- Educate professionals on (recognizing) homosexuality.
- Let pink seniors speak for themselves and express their needs.

### **Pink seniors' emancipation**

Are you interested in how we work or what we can do for you? For more information about pink seniors or LGBT emancipation, contact:

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### **MOVISIE**

MOVISIE is the Netherlands centre for social development. We support and advise professional organizations, volunteer organizations and government institutions. Our aim is to contribute to a society in which people are empowered to full capacity.

### **Contact us**

MOVISIE is a learning organization willing to work with other countries and to share experiences in international cooperation. Are you interested in our work? Would you like to know more about our projects or do you want to cooperate with us? Feel free to contact us.

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