

## Some comments on ICT and old age in The Netherlands

The 'Raad van Ouderen' (Board of Seniors) was installed in 2018 as an advisory committee to the Ministry of VWS (Public Health, Well-being and Sport) on matters relevant to old age. Members are also active in regional and national senior-networks. Two recent comments of the Board are directly related to the topics of our SeLiD project. They are summarized below.

1. Unasked advice about digital aids and appliances for senior's care and well-being (July 2020)
  - Digital devices may result in a cost benefit in the domain of care. This benefit should lead to more space for human face-to-face contact, a primary need for vulnerable elderly.
  - Domotica (digital appliances in and around the home) should always be developed according to the needs and wants of the person concerned: never 'one size fits all' but 'made-to-measure'.
  - It is vital that ICT-applications should contribute to the quality of life as experienced by the older user. So, a careful inventory of what makes this person's life worthwhile should be at the base of technological development of auxiliary tools.
  - ICT devices developed for protection or safeguarding the older user may be explicitly incompatible with that person's autonomy. It is essential that his/her choices should be respected. Legislation on the subject of ownership of medical personal data might help to resolve one of these conflicts of interest.
  
2. Advice on request of the Minister of VWS about sustainable initiatives originated during the Corona crisis (November 2020)
  - The Board consulted their own rank and file; the response was 137 filled in questionnaires
  - The Board investigated initiatives
    - for and by seniors
    - aimed at seniors living on their own, specially the more vulnerable ones
    - aimed at social alliance, sense of community, fighting loneliness
    - contributing to relieve effects of total or partial lockdown
    - simple to start and to multiply.
  - Conclusions, (all related to the basic need for contact, especially where face-to-face contacts were minimised): 320 initiatives were mentioned
    - videocalling (76x)
    - telephone-circles (62x)
    - doing things together, bingo, shopping, meals (53x)
    - whatsapp groeps (44x)
    - exercise together (37x)
  - Advice to the Minister: invest in promoting and supporting initiatives aimed at the need of mutual contacts, together with relevant stakeholders (communities, well-being organisations, neighbourhood-centres, churches etc.). Start with video-calling and telephone circles

Press release concerning this advice:

- **NEED OF CONTACT:** seniors living on their own need contacts to counterbalance loneliness. Initiatives like call-circles can support this.
- **PROMOTE INITIATIVES LIKE VIDEOCALLING:** can be implemented at relative low cost; Minister, emphasise this tool!
- **HELP AND SUPPORT USE OF DIGITAL DEVICES:** create a central helpdesk for questions and advice about video calling and other means of digital contact. Support local initiatives.

IJlst, 26 November 2020

IJda Blüm

Reference: Raad van Ouderen, *Advies Raad van Ouderen initiatieven in tijden van Corona, November 2020*, <https://www.beteroud.nl/beteroud/media/documents/Advies-Raad-van-ouderen-belcirkels-en-andere-initiatieven-corona.pdf>