

# HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

## 41st Session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

Stakeholder's Submission on:

### The Human Rights Situation in **THE NETHERLANDS**

Submitted by:

**Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23)**  
*(NGO's in Consultative Status with the ECOSOC)*



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## INTRODUCTION

The Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23) is a catholic international association founded in Italy. The Community is now present in thirty-six countries of the five continents. The Association has Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It has been present in the Netherlands since 2006. The information and data provided in this document is sourced from APG23's members and volunteers in the Netherlands and as a result of the projects that APG23 is carrying out: face-to-face interviews with stakeholders, monitoring activities, and public documents and research materials.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. THE RIGHT TO LIFE

#### FOCUS ON: PART III Article 6 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

APG23 is a partner of "One of Us". This is a European Citizens' Initiative launched by a group of citizens from some countries of the European Union to push Institutions to guarantee the protection of human beings from their conception<sup>2</sup>. In The Netherlands, euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide were legalized on April 1, 2002 by the Termination of Life on Request and Assisted Suicide (Review Procedures) Act for Dutch citizens over 12 years old.<sup>3</sup> On Oct. 16, 2020, the Dutch Health Minister, Hugo de Jonge, announced plans to extend legal physician-assisted treatment to terminally ill children between the ages of one and 12 years old. It is undeniable that the incidence of euthanasia in The Netherlands is high and rising year by year. In the Dutch system, there are commissions which are responsible for monitoring the application of the law on euthanasia, but their effectiveness is widely questioned.<sup>4</sup> Investigations of possible abuse are known in the Netherlands<sup>5</sup> and come from various sources. By reading the reports of control commissions, it is possible to see that they sometimes validate cases of euthanasia that are at the limit of legality, or even beyond the provisions of the law. According to the third five-year report on the evaluation of the Dutch law (2012-2016), "When a doctor has acted in a way that does not comply with the criteria of thoroughness but apparently in good faith, the commission prefers to adopt an educational attitude towards him or her rather than to initiate proceedings"<sup>6</sup>. While international human rights treaties have not established a "right to die", many contain explicit protections of the right to life. Under international human rights law, the right to life creates both negative and positive obligations for States. In other words, States must not only refrain from taking actions that violate the right to life, but also act affirmatively to create conditions necessary to protect that right.<sup>7</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup>In particular the "Hidden Poverty" project takes place mainly in Boxtel, where the APG23 reception structure is located, but it also expands to the villages on the outskirts of the city. Some activities take place in the nearby town of Hertogenbosch, where the partner association StichtingLoods has its headquarters; others in the municipality of Vught. Starting in 2013, the Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII also began to deal with Sinti families settled in small nomadic camps located on the outskirts of Boxtel, Sint-Oedenrode, Son en Breugel and Best. where the "Misha de Vries" school is located. The project implementation areas are all located in the province of North Brabant, which has a population of approximately 2,513,700 inhabitants, constantly growing, and a high population density of 510 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://oneofus.eu/about-us/> and for positions taken with respect to the Netherlands <https://oneofus.eu/completed-life-in-the-netherlands/>

<sup>3</sup>The Act states that physicians who perform the procedures will be exempt from criminal liability and set forth criteria for physicians to follow to legally euthanize or assist in the suicide of a patient. Under the law, new-borns may be euthanized if they are born with unbearable suffering, there is no alternate solution, and the parents, physician, and an independent physician agree to the procedure. Groningen Protocol, the criteria under which infants may be euthanized was written by Eduard Verhagen, MD, JD, in Sep. 2004.

<sup>4</sup> This control is carried out a posteriori - that is, after the death of the person - and is based on the simple declaration made by the doctor who performed the euthanasia. It is futile to hope to protect the life of persons with a control carried out after their death.

<sup>5</sup>On the situation in the Netherlands, see: L'euthanasie aux Pays-Bas, Alliance Vita, November 24, 2017.

See in particular the report by Pierre Barnérias, "L'euthanasie, jusqu'où ?" (2013)

[https://ecli.org/euthanasia/french-institutions/euthanasie--le-contre-exemple-des-lois-belge-et-neerlandaise#\\_ftn10](https://ecli.org/euthanasia/french-institutions/euthanasie--le-contre-exemple-des-lois-belge-et-neerlandaise#_ftn10)

See also <https://academic.oup.com/bmb/article/125/1/145/4850942> Death on demand? An analysis of physician-administered euthanasia in The Netherlands Robert Preston British Medical Bulletin, Volume 125, Issue 1, March 2018, Pages 145–155.

See also August 26th, 2016 a study by "SCEN" doctors (Steun in Consultancy bij Euthanasia in Nederland), maintains that many cases are practiced because the individual requesting euthanasia did not receive adequate care.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/23/three-netherlands-euthanasia-cases-investigated>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/stories-45117163>

<https://www.bmj.com/company/newsroom/unexplained-7-fold-variation-in-euthanasia-rates-across-the-netherlands/>

See Research: Euthanasia in the Netherlands: a claims data cross-sectional study of geographical variation doi 10.1136/bmjspcare-2020-002573 Journal: BMJ Supportive & Palliative Care

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ieb-eib.org/ancien-site/pdf/20170704-derde-evaluatie-wtl.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Experts have debated whether the right to life could be interpreted as including a "right to end life." However, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) – the only human rights court to have adjudicated this issue – held that the European Convention on Human Rights' right to life "...cannot,

Human Rights Committee (HRC), which monitors the implementation the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, already expressed similar concerns in its concluding observations to States that permit euthanasia.<sup>8</sup> The Netherlands, “with 28 years of legal euthanasia, experiences large-scale unexplained geographical variation in the incidence of euthanasia. The unexplained part of the variation may include the possibility that part of the euthanasia practice may have to be understood in terms of underuse, overuse or misuse”<sup>9</sup>.

We recommend to:

1. *Investigate possible overuse and/or abuse of access to euthanasia with independent, accurate and sufficiently detailed data collections*
2. *Adopt legislative measures to better protect the right to life in particular of all categories of people more fragile and exposed to suffering*
3. *Development of the so-called palliative care*

## 2. TRAFFICKING AND GENDER EQUALITY

### FOCUS ON: Recommendations 131.124 up to 131.126 and 131.140, 131.142

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APG23 is partner of the Right Way European project co-funded by the European Union. The project includes literature review research and analyses of the frameworks and promising practices used in seven European countries (Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and the Netherlands). In the Netherlands, Local government officials are not ignorant of the prevalence of human trafficking. The prostitution industry has been legal in the Netherlands since 2000. Once it has been legalised, the demand for services increased. Human traffickers import international women to meet this demand. In addition to sexual exploitation, human trafficking also takes place in economic social areas where victims are subject to employment under deplorable conditions. More than 6,000 individuals fall victim to human trafficking each year in the Netherlands, with roughly two-thirds of cases involving coerced sexual exploitation. In 2018, the Dutch government implemented its new anti-trafficking plan. It focuses on identifying victims, strengthening communication between shareholders, encouraging governments to take anti-trafficking action at a local level and to improve the work done to prevent labour trafficking. In 2018, the European Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human

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Beings (GRETA) published a report making note that the trafficking situation in the Netherlands requires increased focus and, even though the Netherlands have made significant improvements in the battle against trafficking, more is needed. Since 2014, the European Parliament with the resolution of 26 February (2014) recognises that prostitution and forced prostitution can have an impact on violence against women in general, as research on sex buyers shows that men who buy sex have a degrading image of women and suggests to the competent national authorities, therefore, that the ban on the purchase of sexual services should be accompanied by a campaign to raise awareness among men. Furthermore, the UE Parliament had considered

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without a distortion of language, be interpreted as conferring the diametrically opposite right, namely a right to die.” Nor does the right to life, according to the ECHR, “create a right to self-determination in the sense of conferring on an individual the entitlement to choose death rather than life.”

<sup>8</sup> U.N. Human Rights Committee, Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 40 of the Covenant, Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee—NETHERLANDS ¶ 7, U.N. DOC. CCPR/C/NLD/CO/4 (Aug. 25, 2009)

<sup>9</sup> See for others references: Euthanasia in the Netherlands: a claims data cross-sectional study of geographical variation <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5919-4856A> Stef Groenewoud1, Femke Atsma1, Mina Arvin1, Gert P Westert1 and Theo A Boer2- and <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsy.2020.622446/full#B45>

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<https://www.resettlement.eu/page/right-way-project-promoting-effective-integration-victims-trafficking#:~:text=Through%20the%20Right%20Way%20Project,experienced%20trafficking%20for%20sexual%20exploitation.>

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GRETA is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by the Parties. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/anti-human-trafficking/greta>

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<https://rm.coe.int/greta-2018-19-fgr-nld-en/16808e70ca>

that one way of combating the trafficking of women and under-age females for sexual exploitation and improving gender equality is the model implemented in Sweden, Iceland and Norway (the so-called Nordic model).

We recommend to:

1. *At a country level, welcome the European Parliament's call in its resolution of 26 February 2014 on sexual exploitation and prostitution, and their consequences for gender equality (2013/2103(INI)) by adopting the so-called "Nordic" legal model and a legislation to end demand and legal prostitution houses.*

### 3. DISABILITY

#### FOCUS ON: Recommendations 131.167 up to 131.170

APG23 is present in Boxtel with a family-home where people who need help (including people with disabilities) are welcomed and taken care of. Students with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities (PIMD) are not yet included in mainstream classrooms at public schools. This student population has the right to be included in mainstream schools (United Nations 2006) and their inclusion could lead to increased opportunities for social interaction with typically developing peers. Despite the obligations that follow from

<sup>13</sup> the CRC and <sup>14</sup> the CRPD convention, inclusive education is not sufficiently achieved in the Netherlands. A project named 'To School Together' has been recently initiated in The Netherlands to promote the integration of students into public schools. Through the ratification of the CRPD convention in 2016, the Dutch state has taken on the obligation to draw up a strategy and a timeframe to shape inclusive education. It is imperative for the Dutch state to take steps towards inclusive education.

We recommend to:

1. *Design and implement a strategy with objectives and a timeline for the realisation of the right to inclusive education*
2. *Adapt the Dutch legislation on education with a clear definition and objectives regarding social inclusion.*
3. *Establish cooperation between education and other policy areas within law and policy regulations.*
4. *Involve children with disabilities in (drafting) policies.*
5. *Organise the funding system of education and care in such a way that inclusive education is promoted.*
6. *Monitor the implementation of inclusive education, develop frameworks in which the values of inclusive education are safeguarded and stimulated so every child can enjoy the right to inclusive education.*

### 4. HOMELESS AND RIGHT TO ADEQUATE HOUSING

#### FOCUS ON: Art.25 Declaration Human Rights and Recommendations

The Netherlands has a serious housing crisis, with the Dutch government under severe pressure to build more affordable housing. Across the country, prices continue to rise and the housing market becomes more and more competitive, with many people having to overbid to buy their dream home. Additionally, the homeless population has grown by more than 70% in the past decade. Some social housing waiting lists in some cities can span up to 15 years. Major cities of the Netherlands have been facing an acute housing crisis marked by

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UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

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UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

higher rents, skyrocketing property prices, evictions and homelessness. Various progressive groups in these cities have formed coalitions for housing rights and affordable and dignified living.<sup>15</sup>The social inequality between renters and homeowners is still enormously increasing due to the disproportionate benefits that homeowners enjoy. As for the waiting time, to get a social housing it takes about 10/15 years. In recent years, housing construction production has halved. According to a research carried out by ABN AMRO, a Dutch credit institution, there are 330 thousand fewer houses than demand requires. The research specifies that it would take one million houses in the next ten years to fill the gap. In addition, a large number of social housing units have been put up for sale in the private sector and hundreds and thousands of houses have been demolished, thus increasing waiting lists across the country.

If on the one hand there is a shortage of houses and waiting times are long, on the other hand, the houses for sale in the Netherlands are only accessible to a few. According to a survey carried out by NVM, an association operating in the Dutch real estate sector, nowadays a house-property costs an average of 419 thousand euros, 19.3% more than the previous year. According to a survey also carried out by the Dutch bank, ABN AMRO, the price of houses in 2022 will increase by 12.5%, and by a further 5% in 2023.<sup>16</sup> "Dutch government policies have created a dichotomy between tenants and homeowners" and "private sector rents have no controls"<sup>17</sup>

We recommend to:

1. *Adopt legislation to subtract housing sales from the profit motive of the private sector and discourage top-selling auctions that favour the richest*
2. *Encourage family size in building square footage rather than small homes that discourage it*
3. *Introduce legislative measures for a moratorium on evictions and rent increases.*
4. *Adopt a public housing policy to guarantee decent housing for the indigent and homeless.*

## 5. MIGRANTS

### FOCUS ON: Recommendations 131.180 up to 131.184

APG23, thanks to the work done by the White Helmets, has addressed many issues concerning human rights in the Netherlands. One in particular: "the working conditions of economic migrants". During the service in collaboration with two associations, the Stichting Loods, and the Straatpastoraat, APG23 was able to come across and experience this problem first hand, by working in contact with migrants<sup>18</sup>. Migrants, mainly employed in the agribusiness and meat industry, were encountered. This type of workforce consists mainly of people from Poland, Bulgaria, and Romania. Extenuating work shifts were observed, from 12 to 14 hours per day in addition to temporary contracts, low wages and very bad housing conditions; small lodgings, sometimes real shantytowns where usually 10/15 people live together.

We consider that the Flexibility and Security Act (1999) should be overcome. It generates a condition of precariousness at work. The agency labour contract is considered as a regular labour contract, but it has a very important criticality, in fact, it is divided into two phases: a first phase in which the contract can be terminated at any time, and the workers are paid for the hours they have worked; a second phase, in which the worker must be offered an open-ended contract of employment. This has allowed and allows employers to fire before the second phase is triggered. This is advantageous for the latter, who save on wages and fringe benefits, but it is also advantageous for the agencies, who in doing so, enter into more and more contracts. Conversely for the workers, who working under these conditions, constantly risk being laid off. In October 2021, research

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<sup>15</sup> These include Woonstrijd in Groningen, Woonprotest in Amsterdam, Woonopstand in Rotterdam and Woonverzet in Hague. Major protests took place in Amsterdam on September 12, in Rotterdam on October 17, and in Hague on November 13 ( 2021).

<sup>16</sup> Information obtained through the availability of A. H., member of the organization (BPW). A. H. interview done on 3/12/2021: by APG23 \_White Helmet Alessandro Federici

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Bond Precaire Woonvormen Association on 3/12/2021: by APG23 \_White Helmet Alessandro Federici

<sup>18</sup> The most recent interviews conducted on 6/01/2022 and 12/01/2022, respectively: by APG23 \_White Helmet Alessandro Federici

released by the International Institute of Social Studies in The Hague showed that migrant workers, mainly coming from Eastern Europe, were living in degrading conditions, were not ensured proper compensation, and were housed illegally. Between a third and half of all workers in the agricultural sector are migrant workers at risk of exploitation. Government policies created in December 2019 were widely considered insufficient and have not properly regulated temporary employment agencies, which are often the cause of the problem. In

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2018, the inspectorate managed to monitor just the 1 percent of companies.

We recommend to:

1. *Adopt public control over the management of employment contracts entrusted to temporary agencies*
2. *Adopt greater protections in the event of dismissal or loss of employment.*
3. *Overcome the Flexibility and Security Act (1999) by providing more protective regulations for workers.*
4. *Enforce greater oversight by the Labour Inspectorate.*
5. *Guarantee medical insurance and official residence to migrant workers, even if temporarily present, so that they are not deprived of their fundamental rights.*

## 6. ROMA MINORITY

### FOCUS ON: Recommendations 131.78

Starting in 2013, APG23 began to deal with Roma and Sinti families settled in small nomadic camps located on the outskirts of Boxtel, Sint-Oedenrode, Son en Breugel and Best. On August 25th, 2021, the CERD launched its concluding observations on the two last *Kingdom of the Netherlands*' reports regarding its fight against discriminations. The "social inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Travellers continues to lag behind", compared to that of other residents in municipalities, "with regards to employment, education and housing". In 2021, in Netherlands, a National Coordinator against Discrimination and Racism (NCDR) and a National committee against discrimination and racism will be established. We believe that it is important to ensure that the Roma population can in any case continue to live in nomadic camps and thus preserve their traditions and identity. Municipalities try to dismantle camps but pay little attention to the maintenance and modernisation of those that continue to exist. Many Roma and Sinti agree to move into conventional accommodation, but the help offered often does not respect their differences and unwittingly there is a risk of homologising and over-incorporating a different culture into the common way of life in the country. The camps are mostly located on the outskirts of large cities, in 'streets' where families gather in places that become semi-nomadic camps. These areas are totally isolated, it is very difficult to access public services and infrastructure; this contributes to the Roma's isolation from the rest of the world. Moreover, some municipalities have not yet implemented the 2018 policy framework for municipal traveller sites.

We recommend to:

1. *Providing for renovations and improvements of the places of stationing and residence of the Roma population*
2. *Full Implement the 2018 policy framework for municipal Roma, Sinti, and Travellers sites*
3. *Providing effective housing support for Roma, Sinti and Travellers with tools that respect their cultural identity*



## ANNEX 1: [White Helmets Netherlands](#)

# THE HIDDEN CITY

Sascha and Renee are two former homeless people, and have created a special sightseeing tour of Den Bosch – *s-Hertogenbosch* – city in the Netherlands where Chiara is carrying out her year of civil service as Casco Bianco: a tour that personally involves and makes you think.

## Written by Chiara Capacchietti, White Helmet APG23 at Den Bosch

We met in front of the San Vincentius at three o'clock with Sascha and Renee on a Monday in March. They, a former homeless person, occasionally take some special guided tours of the town of 's-Hertogenbosch. They show, to those who wish, the life of the city, its corners and hidden streets with the eyes of a homeless. The guided tour is condensed with historical details, small details of the Middle Ages and recent history that can only be seen with a more attentive eye, together with the personal history of these two *boys*: street life, cold, humiliation, hunger, occupied houses.

The first stop is at the beginning of a collected street, with somewhat refined premises, with tables, stoves and sofas on the road. We sit on



the bench, Sascha immediately immerses us in the heart of the main theme: not having a shelter. "Imagine you are here, sitting, cold and hungry. A few meters away there are young people, your peers, who can drink a few beers, eat something hot, next to the warmth of an electric stove, chatting cheerfully in company. At that moment, you not only feel distant from the needs of hunger or thirst or cold, but also in being able to socialize with others, have a normal life in your twenties, seasoned with outings with friends." And you already understand that it will be a tour that will leave you something, not only because it will make you think, **but also because these people open up to tell you about their piece of life**, of which at that moment they make you participate.

Sascha is 46 years old, he ended up in the street when he was a boy, he spent the next period between one occupied house and another. Currently, he works at THE SOS as a volunteer, the place where we White Helmets carry out the external project. It is a second-hand shop, in which so-called "far from the labour market" people are inserted due to problems of various kinds: from drug addiction to alcoholism, from mental disability to poverty and so on. Sascha, moreover, is also our Dutch teacher, meticulous, not always constant, but attentive and patient with our confusion. Renee, in her forties, works at the San Vincentius, a second-hand shop but also a social restaurant for people with little economic availability. He ended up on the street due to conflicts with his family, as well as having experienced psychiatric hospitalizations. Occasionally, Renee, Sascha and another

former homeless man organize these guided tours of the hidden city and, according to them, you can go around with each of the three and you can always have different experiences, seasoned with the peculiar facts of everyone's personal history.

The tour continues, fortunately today is a beautiful day, a bit cold but it's sunny. The boys show us a staircase of a church used as a meeting place, where together with other people in the same condition they spent some time together, respecting the urban quiet, so much so that the police turned a blind eye to these gatherings. Meanwhile, we pass in front of the cathedral of Sint Jan and Sascha points out a decorative detail: one of the angels that adorn the outside of the church is on the phone and until recently there was a handset near the gate with which you could call him.

They then show us a theatre where at Christmas an event is organized for the homeless, in which packages are given away and a hot meal is offered. Afterwards, we enter the internal alleys: although we are always in the centre, sometimes it seems to lose orientation. We find ourselves in deserted, silent alleys, full of historical details: Sascha shows us that this is the window through which medicines were given to poor people outside the walls; that is the square where the nobles organized the banquet for the poor to carry out charity and secure a place in paradise; what is now the shoe shop, was once the prison of the city.

For a homeless person it is important to know where the water fountains are and have a small shelter for the night. Sascha told us how he used to hide in a small private street that can be accessed through a gate, obviously closed to strangers, but he managed to overtake him thanks to a hole between the bar and the wall. However, the condominiums did not like it, so after some time protruding nails were planted on the wall to close the passage. **To be honest, they are details that are not noticed: barely visible nails on a wall that you think can serve some purpose, not to prevent access to a person.** It makes me reflect on how today we live so much in fear of the different and the unknown that we close ourselves to the other, giving space to the prejudice that that homeless person will certainly be dangerous and of bad faith, since he has nowhere to live. We forget that those in front of us may be living a particularly difficult period of their lives, of which we probably cannot even imagine the intensity. With this I do not want to promote unconditional trust, but rather the pleasure of meeting and knowing the other, of opening up to different ways of life.

We interrupted our tour with a little break at a café in the square behind the cathedral. We chatted together about the economic and social condition of the two countries, Holland and Italy, and we explained our project better: Sascha and Renee were very interested in understanding our activity, our motivations and intentions.

Towards the end of the visit, we are at the end of the main street, where the Inloopschip structure is located: it is a dormitory for the homeless, who, paying a sum of € 5, can ensure a warm night. Although it is not a coveted place for a homeless person, as it is still a dormitory, it is in any case a starting point through which to be hung up to the services of the territory. It is also through the operators of Inloopschip that requests for reception arrive in our family home.

We have reached the end of our afternoon; we say goodbye to Renee and Sascha and continue to thank them for their availability. It was two really intense and special hours: my head is full of information, images and emotions. A wonderful afternoon spent together, full of reflections and questions, facilitated by their great openness to answer all our curiosities. I am always struck by people who have such an experience, because they have so much to tell and to transmit and this project, The hidden city, is certainly an original form to do it.



To learn more:

[Sos Flea Market:](#)

The store deals with the reintegration into work of people far from the labour market, providing a welcoming environment, useful for recovering those social skills necessary to keep a job, reactivate lost or damaged interpersonal relationships, learn skills.

[Inloopschip:](#)

Dormitory for the homeless where about twenty-five people are accommodated, with a separate section for women. During the colder months, however, we try to give shelter to as many homeless people as possible beyond the pre-established number of places. The threshold of the cold emergency is triggered when it is 0 degrees. Before being located in a real building, initially this project involved the reception on a boat (hence the name), docked in one of the canals that cross the city of 's-Hertogenbosch.

## ANNEX II: [White Helmets Netherlands](#)

# ROB AND THE "PUB": HOMELESS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Den Bosch is a Dutch city with about 140,000 inhabitants and the *Pub* is the only social center that provides a welcome and an alternative to people "on the first level", that is, those who live on the street. At *the Pub* Samuele met Rob, a polite gentleman and sometimes in the clouds, with a girlfriend waiting for him in the Philippines.

Written by Samuele Ramberti, White Helmet APG23 at Den Bosch

Rob is a gentleman in his sixties, a past between the Dutch army, the war in Iraq, a few years in prison for illegal cultivation of marijuana, a couple of houses seized and many debts with the Dutch state, 12 years of life in Mexico where he says he married 3 times and had 5 children, an unhappy return to Holland and a month spent on vacation in the Philippines where a girl is waiting for him to get married. He has little gray hair and a printed smile, a great desire to tell, to talk, to argue and quarrel. It was not difficult to make friends with each other, from the first day I presented myself as a volunteer I tried to ask myself why he ended up on the street.



Rob lives in *Inloopschip*, a social hostel in the town of Den Bosch, which is home to those who have nowhere else to go. He has a locker in which he neatly keeps the few clothes he has but the space for the rest is always missing. **In the jacket with which I see him every day, each pocket is perfectly organized and contains something: on the left deodorant and perfume, on the right shampoo and shower gel, in the inner pocket shaving foam, razor blade and toothbrush.** He cannot afford to have another locker, so he does as he can. In the hostel you cannot trust anyone; he tells me that the worst persons are ready to take away even the bar of soap, but he has clear in mind the thought that in a few months he will leave again for the Philippines, what will ever be to take a few bottles every day. I see him at least 3 times a week and while the others come and go, he is always there and is ready to help. He's a polite guy, sometimes a bit in the clouds but it's unlikely to create problems for anyone.

I gladly started going to the Pub a short time ago. It is a *post if* we want to tell the truth: it is a recreational project for people with problems of different kinds, from drug addicts to alcoholics,

homeless, lonely people or those who temporarily go through economic or relational problems. Explained in this way it seems almost a beautiful thing, and surely the end is very useful, but it is not easy. **It is not easy to get in touch with those who are always alarmed about the person in front of them**, with those who drank too much the night before or maybe even did it. With those who do not wash often, with those who ask you for money because it is their birthday and want to pull cocaine, with those who have difficulty reasoning and if you do not listen to him, he screams behind you. **Yet to these places, after a while, you become attached to them**. At least I, every day I realize more how important it is for these people to have someone who listens to them, and if he can, helps them. And, in their own way, they also love you, they appreciate that you spend time with them, that you get your hands dirty with them and share breakfast and lunch with them.

**Because at the Pub you don't play cards: you go into the woods, cut trees and sell wood to burn.** With -10 ° humid as only in Holland there can be you are outside, without fear of ice, snow and the icy wind that screams inside your ears. You are outside, warming up carrying logs, competing for who lifts the heaviest one. Someone with broken canvas shoes, someone without a jacket, **with frozen feet but the desire not to surrender to life**. And try flying high again.

## **II Pub**

The abbreviation Pub stands for "Pastoraal Uitzend Bureau" literally "Temporary Pastoral Agency", a project for street children born in 1998, currently attended between 25 and 35 people a day, supported by the municipality of Den Bosch. The city has about 140,000 inhabitants and it is estimated that there are between 80 and 100 people who live permanently on the street.

**It is the only social centre in Den Bosch that provides a welcome and an alternative to people "on the first level", that is, to those who live on the street:** for some it is a place to have breakfast, for others a workplace. The structure is open from 8.30, when breakfast is provided, at lunchtime, and inside there are several projects: **a cycle-workshop, a project for the maintenance of public greenery, a street cleaning project and one of artistic expression**. There are strict rules regarding the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs: people with an altered psycho-physical state are not accepted and when the situation arises the person(s) in question are removed and accepted back the days following the normalization of conditions. Those who work inside the centre receive a daily fee of 5€ for about a couple of hours of work a day. This money is used to pay for the hostel that will host them overnight, providing them with a warm place to sleep and dinner, although many, especially during the summer season, prefer to sleep on the street, or in the woods, because they say they feel safer. Currently in the Pub it is managed by a manager and two volunteers.

## ANNEX III: [White Helmets Netherlands](#)

# OF VOEDSELTUIN AND GENERATIVITY

Restorative justice, volunteering and care of the "food garden"... and also of themselves. Lucia tells us about the existence of *other possible ways, different responses to our social and economic needs*

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I knew a lot about [Voedseltuin](#) and [generativity](#) just before I arrived here in the Netherlands. These are two words that now, however, mean a lot to me: they give me confidence and fill my heart, they know of social justice, second chances, solidarity and sustainability. *Voedseltuin* in Dutch means "food garden", a nice way to call and understand this social garden that involves two groups of people: on the one hand the volunteers of the homonymous organization and on the other the [Reclassering](#), a peripheral body of restorative justice.

The volunteers are the lifeblood of the project, those who most believe in the cause and dedicate themselves with gratuity and dedication to its realization: all the harvest, in fact, is destined entirely to the food bank, a charity that every year distributes food to people who are in conditions of marginality and poverty. The donations that arrive at the counter are mainly canned goods and dry foods, mostly close to expiration or already expired; from this request comes the proposal and the commitment of Voedseltuin to provide organic vegetables, fresh and of excellent quality to those people to whom the waste of our consumption is usually destined.

The beauty and preciousness of the garden, however, do not reside only in the ultimate goal of the project, but also (or in my opinion above all) in the people who, with their time and not a little energy, make all this possible. The volunteers involved in the project, in fact, have behind them cumbersome stories and experiences, some of suffering, others of dependence, social marginality and assistance from services. And then there is the *Reclassering*, that branch of restorative justice that sees offenders *give something back to the community*, remedy the damage inflicted by carrying out socially useful, meaningful and *generative* work.

Coming to the garden, spending time together, making your skills available to third parties makes all these people feel alive, part of a solidarity network where you can breathe deeply the reciprocity that keeps us together. It is precisely here, at Voedseltuin, that I grasp the profound meaning of the concept of [generativity](#): a way of conceiving action and investing resources in activities that do not end in individual consumption, but that become relational works that generate greater common



good, accessible to more and more people. It is a virtuous, responsible and supportive circle, where action is *regenerating* for those who perform it (there are those who suffer their pain and those who, **in taking care of the earth, learn a little to take care of themselves**) and *generative* for those who reap the fruits. In giving something to others, in recirculating the resources from which one is sometimes benefiting, regardless of one's physical and social condition, there is a strong value of self-help that charges and fills people with trust.

So far, I have neglected another aspect that is instead constitutive of the project: the method with which the land is cultivated is that of **ecological agriculture**, attentive to the **environment**, to the km0, to the well-being of the soil and local fauna. As Hans Jonas, a German philosopher and theorist of the ethics of responsibility applied to ecology, pointed out in his time, there can be no social justice without a heartfelt and shared environmental responsibility, which allows us to continue to live in healthy and dignified human contexts.

**The trust I was talking about at the beginning, therefore, comes from here, from an experience of help and solidarity that is different, sustainable.**

I close by recalling that in the last 15 years, in Italy, 90% of the economic resources allocated to welfare are disbursed in monetary transfers, while only 10% is invested in services: therefore, hasty responses tend to prevail in terms of economic subsidies, which only partially respond to the complex needs of people. However, there are other possible ways, different responses to our social and economic needs, generative welfare models in which the resources used can regenerate and produce additional resources, which increase the solidarity and well-being of the community.