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Inclusive City Almere, project in the Netherlands

In Inclusive Cities people with and without disabilities or health problems have the same opportunities for adequate income, education, employment, housing, transportation and health services, sports and artistic activities. The Netherlands decentralises policy and programs for people with disabilities or health problems. This results in new responsibilities for local municipalities. This is expected to be more cost-effective than national centralized policy, programs and projects. The city of Almere is developing policies for the upcoming responsibilities with a focus on more active citizenship and promotion of local initiatives by connecting citizens and community organizations.

In collaboration with Disability Studies in Nederland (DSiN) and Universities the city Almere started the project *Inclusive City Almere* that connects and strengthens existing community initiatives and good practices by building on research, education and local government. DSiN plans the 'first Inclusive City in the Netherlands' and does research on issues that promote or hinder the desired outcomes. Since 2009 DSiN has been involved in various projects in Almere among which 'The Inclusive City' and 'The Almere Quality of Life Study'. Research by DSiN is inclusive in that people with disabilities always take part: Noting about us without us!

Back ground

The New Town Almere is built near Amsterdam on land concurred on the see by building huge dikes and therefor 4 meter below see-level. The first inhabitants settled 25 years ago. There are 200.000 inhabitants in 2013 and Almere is expected to become the fifth largest city in the Netherlands with 350.000 by 2025. The city's population is not bound by a common history; most people living in Almere are born elsewhere.

The project for Almere aims to connect the different existing activities and initiatives in all areas of life including education, employment, health care, art and culture. The focus is on strengthening existing local initiatives and infrastructures by bringing together people, organisations and new initiatives. The project gives insight into facilitators and barriers for an inclusive city and in the use of experiences of people with and without disabilities to create and share new knowledge.

The scope of the pilot-project is on the neighborhood 'Stripheldenbuurt'. The different community initiatives in the neighborhood are connected with each other by organizing meetings and social media for inhabitants. By presenting the different initiatives for an audience people start sharing common visions and goals.

Collaboration with the Windesheim College Almere and Disability Studies at VU University in Amsterdam connects research and education with good practice. DSiN mentors students in internships. Students

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with and without disabilities participate in the project and the research part. In addition they receive guest lectures in the area of disability studies.

The objectives of 'The Inclusive City Almere' project are to:

- Strengthen the effectiveness of the existing instruments and methods for inclusion of people with disabilities or health problems
- Create an infrastructure promoting inclusion in all areas of life: housing, services, employment....

General information:

Duration of the project: 2011- 2014

Project team: the city of Almere and Disability Studies in the Netherlands

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www.disabilitystudies.nl/inclusieve-stad

www.facebook.com/inclusievestad

www.de-stripheldenbuurt.nl

<http://mensenmakendestad.almere.nl/initiatieven-in-almere-buiten/inclusieve-stad-stripheldenbuurt/>

Website: www.disabilitystudies.nl/inclusieve-stad/