



Wishes and needs of veterans

Fact Sheet

Introduction

What are the wishes and needs of veterans? The answer to this question is of great importance to the parties shaping and implementing the veterans' policy, such as the Ministry of Defence, the various associations and interest groups and the National Care System for Veterans, and also the Veterans' Institute.

Clear information is required on what is important to veterans in order to be able to tailor the policy and its implementation to the wishes and needs of veterans as well as possible. Various studies have been made to identify those wishes and needs. The study results produce a consistent picture. The wishes and needs can be divided into roughly four categories, namely:

- contact with other veterans;
- recognition and appreciation;
- care and support;
- information.

This fact sheet provides an explanation of the wishes and needs by category and of how they are met.

Contact with other veterans

A key need among veterans is contact with other veterans, both those from their own unit or mission and with others. This mainly has to do with exchanging experiences and tales: they don't just want to relate something, but also want something in return, such as recognition, understanding and the sense of belonging. That latter need manifests itself in the powerful sense of camaraderie which the vast majority of veterans will have experienced during their missions. The sense of belonging will often play a role in later life to a greater or lesser extent.

There are sufficient opportunities to meet, including in person, as the following, by no means exhaustive, list shows. Veterans are also making increasing use of the internet and social media to contact each other.

Netherlands Veterans' Day	In 2014, 90,000 people attended the annual Netherlands Veterans' Day in The Hague. They included several thousand veterans, 5000 of whom took part in the march past.
Local and regional veterans' days	About three-quarters of all Dutch municipalities organise a veterans' day annually. More than 30,000 veterans are estimated to take part in them every year.
Veterans days organised branches of the armed forces	Thousands of veterans attend one of the veterans' days organised by the four branches of the armed forces every year.
Remembrance ceremonies	Dozens of remembrance services take place at military memorials every year within the local community and the community at large.
Reunions	At the end of 2013, nearly 500 reunion associations were registered with the Veterans' Institute. A substantial number of them organise an annual reunion.
Associations and foundations	Since the end of 2013, the Netherlands has had about 50 fairly large associations and foundations which represent the interests of veterans. The majority are affiliated with the Veterans' Platform (VP).
Veterans' cafés, community centres and drop-in centres	At the end of 2013, the Netherlands had about 90 veterans' cafés, community centres and drop-in centres where veterans can meet up.
Meeting events	Stichting De Basis [De Basis Foundation] in Doorn organises many meeting events, some running over several days, every year.
Other veterans' events	There are various events which are organised on an occasional or regular basis. Examples include return trips (to the mission country), sports activities, motorcycle tours, events involving art and culture, symposia, and the like.

Recognition and appreciation

A second key need is recognition of and appreciation for the commitment shown, efforts made and risks taken. This also includes recognition of the impact their deployment could have on veterans. This means there is a need for support with, and understanding of, the problems experienced by veterans. Veterans' days and remembrance ceremonies, as well as the many smaller events and gestures of support are some of the ways in which society shows its appreciation. One example of this is facilitating and/or supporting, including with financial backing, a number of activities and facilities such as those in the above list. Other examples include granting decorations, and giving due consideration to veterans in publications, through the media and in military museums. There are other ways of showing recognition and appreciation, though, as the far from exhaustive list below shows.

The Veterans' Card	All veterans are entitled to a veterans' card. The veterans' card gives veterans access to various facilities and benefits (see below). The pass is printed in two languages, which means it can also be used abroad to prove veteran status.
The Veterans' Commemorative Badge	All veterans receive a Veterans' Commemorative Badge. The veterans' badge symbolises appreciation for the risky work veterans have performed in the past as service personnel on behalf of society.
Checkpoint	Veterans' card holders receive ten issues of the veterans' magazine Checkpoint every year. Surviving partners are also entitled to receive Checkpoint. Veterans in active service of the Ministry of Defence have the option of receiving the publication in digital form, free of charge.
Free transport	Veterans are entitled to a free travel pass to attend the veterans' days organised by branches of the armed forces and the annual remembrance ceremony at the East Indies Memorial. A veteran can also apply for two free travel passes for the journey to veterans' events of a more personal nature, such as a reunion of a veteran's own section or a visit to the local veterans' day.
Benefits	Veterans' card holders can benefit from various discounts on a variety of products and services, such as museum tickets, overnight stays in hotels, books, CDs and DVDs.

Care and support

A minority of veterans are in need of care and support. Roughly 20% of veterans will need some form of care or support at some point, and 5% need short-term or long-term professional help. The Veterans' Institutes' Veterans' Office is the central point which all veterans and their relations can approach for the care and facilities provided by the National Care System for Veterans and the General Pension Fund for Public Employees.

Information

As the fourth and final need, the wide need for information cannot go unmentioned. Veterans say they need information about a deployment, including for their home front partners. They would also like information about the potential consequences of deployment experiences, as well as information about facilities for veterans and services provided. That information can be found through the Veterans' Office and the Veterans' Institute website.

Conclusion

A sizeable majority of veterans viewed the veterans' policy positively. Roughly 20% said they were neutral or less satisfied. The fact that younger veterans appear to be less involved in the policy is a concern. They make less use of the opportunities provided by the policy and they are also less satisfied than the older veterans with the opportunities on offer. The challenge for the policymakers would therefore appear to be to identify the wishes and needs of the group of younger veterans so as to enthuse and involve them.

Further information

This fact sheet provides general information. For further information about the needs and wishes of veterans, go to the website www.veteraneninstituut.nl, or contact us by telephone (088 - 3340050) or by email (info@veteraneninstituut.nl).

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