



Netherlands Veterans' Institute

Fact Sheet

Parties in policy

Several parties are involved in formulating and implementing veterans' policy. The principal five are:

- the Ministry of Defence, which is responsible for determining and financing the policy and for some of its implementation;
- the *Stichting het Veteraneninstituut (Vi)* [Veterans' Institute Foundation] which takes responsibility for implementing a significant part of veterans' policy;
- the *Stichting Nederlandse Veteranendag (NLVD)* [Netherlands Veterans' Day Foundation] which organises the Netherlands Veterans' Day every year and promotes public appreciation of veterans;
- the *Landelijk Zorgsysteem voor Veteranen (LZV)* [National Care System for Veterans], a partnership of civil and military healthcare institutions which provides tailor-made care for veterans, partners and families;
- the *Stichting Veteranen Platform (VP)* [Veterans' Platform Foundation], an umbrella organisation made up of more than forty veterans' organisations and trade unions which look after veterans' interests.

Organisation and objectives

The Veterans' Institute was formed on 10 May 2000 at the initiative of, among others, the Ministry of Defence as a partnership between the key partners involved in veterans' policy, and became a foundation in 2003. In line with the Ministry's objectives, the *Vi* seeks:

- to ensure Dutch veterans are provided with the best care and services, and their family members with proper support;
- to promote and stimulate public appreciation for the services veterans have performed at the behest of the government and society and of the sacrifices made in the process;

- to disseminate knowledge of subjects relevant to veterans and encourage scientific research into those subjects.

Since mid-2014, the *Vi* has had what is known as the *Veteranenloket* [Veterans' Office] to ensure veterans and their home front partners receive the best care and services. The Veterans' Office offers access to the existing care and other services provided by the Ministry of Defence, the *Vi* itself, the National Care System for Veterans, the *Algemeen Burgerlijk Pensioenfonds (ABP)* [General Pension Fund for Public Employees] and the Veterans' Platform. The office is also open outside office hours for urgent care requirements.

Care and after-care

The *Vi*'s primary objective concerns veterans' care. Some veterans in need of care do not seek help, or do so only very late in the day. One reason for this is that they do not always know exactly who to turn to with their various problems or questions. The Veterans' Institute set up the abovementioned Veterans' Office as the first port of call for care to introduce clarity and make assistance more accessible.

Veterans and their relations can contact the Veterans' Office (088-3340000 and info@veteranenloket.nl) with all their requests for help and problems related to deployment. This could involve, for example, mental and/or physical symptoms or problems adjusting after returning from deployment. GPs and institutions coming into contact with veterans with health problems resulting from their deployment can also use the Veterans' Office to obtain information. A request for help may also concern material matters, such as income schemes, benefits and pensions, debt counselling and the provision of benefits in kind, including medical benefits.

Once the Veterans' Office has received a request for help, the assistance and counselling process begins. The Veterans' Office has a team of care coordinators to deal with those requests. This team works closely with civilian and military experts, institutions and National Care System for Veterans institutions, including:

- specialised social work through *de Basis*¹;
- Military Mental Healthcare Association;
- Central Military Hospital, Psychiatry Department;
- the Ministry of Defence's Welfare department;
- the Ministry of Defence's Spiritual Counselling Services;
- civilian healthcare institutions such as *Centrum '45*, the *Sinai Centre* and general mental healthcare institutions;
- General Pension Fund for Public Employees.

Partly in collaboration with the *Vi*, *de Basis* in Doorn provides several readily accessible programmes where veterans can exchange experiences, as well as after-care programmes. To help veterans who might need care to access it, or to point them in the right direction, the Veterans' Platform is presently working on setting up a nationwide network of certified helpers providing baseline support (veterans' helpers).

¹ Translator's note: *De Basis* is a provider of care services following trauma, supplying services to personnel of the army, fire brigade, ambulance, police force and public transport.

Appreciation

The *Vi*'s second objective is to promote public appreciation. The *Vi* promotes, and tries to increase, public appreciation, in part on behalf of the Ministry of Defence. Appreciation is shown by, for example, distributing the veterans' pin and the veterans' card. The benefits provided by that card include:

- a free subscription to Checkpoint, the veterans' monthly magazine;
- free NS [Dutch Railways] tickets for attending a reunion or remembrance ceremony;
- various discounts on a variety of facilities and products, e.g. for insurance, restaurants, performances and optical equipment.

The *Vi* also helps to promote and stimulate public appreciation by:

- helping to organise remembrance ceremonies and reunions;
- acting as an intermediary in or helping with applications for decorations;
- helping with the management and maintenance of memorials;
- helping to organise veterans' days held by branches of the armed forces, local and regional veterans' days and the Netherlands Veterans' Day;
- providing hundreds of guest talks by veterans for school children and students every year through a large-scale schools' project (Veteraan in de Klas [Veteran in the Classroom]);
- disseminating knowledge on deployment experiences, their consequences and other veteran-related topics in the form of lectures and (digital) publications.

With a view to increasing public knowledge of deployment experiences, the *Vi* also maintains active contact with (military) education establishments, the media and other social organisations.

Knowledge and research

The third objective of the *Vi* is aimed at increasing knowledge and making it accessible. With that in mind, since its formation, the *Vi* has had a Knowledge and Research Centre (KOC) which unites various scientific disciplines including military history, psychology, political science and cultural anthropology. The KOC works closely with civilian and military research institutions in this country and abroad.

The key tasks of the KOC are:

- collecting and increasing knowledge by, among other things, encouraging, supervising and performing research into deployment experiences and the impact they have on veterans;
- passing on knowledge by means of lectures and digital publications;
- supplying information and giving advice to parties involved in the veterans' policy and to veterans and their relations.

Ongoing research being carried out by the KOC - usually in collaboration with other research institutions - relates to, for example, public appreciation for veterans, the health and welfare of veterans and their attitudes towards seeking help, the group identity of veterans, the meaning veterans attach to their deployment experiences and - in the form of an annual questionnaire survey - the opinions and needs of veterans. An interview project where more than a thousand interviews with veterans, most of which are accessible to the public, have been amassed is being run through the KOC (1940 to date).

Further information

This fact sheet provides general information. You will find further information about the VI's activities in respect of care, appreciation, knowledge and research at www.veteraneninstituut.nl and www.veteranenloket.nl. You may also contact us by telephone (088-3340050) or by email (info@veteraneninstituut.nl).

This is a Veterans' Institute publication.
November 2014.