

The struggle for leisure

It sounds so simple to actually do what you enjoy doing: playing sports, going to a concert or participating in a youth movement. Yet leisure time is not a given for everyone.

“One dies of loneliness and boredom before dying of hunger”. The 1994 General Report on Poverty (Algemeen Verslag van de Armoede) hit the nail on the head. Yet the opposite is also true: for those who have to live on a limited budget leisure time generates positive effects on general well-being, social participation and self-confidence. **Leisure and tourist activities are important for body and mind.**



Everyone deserves a holiday

There are many strong, successful strategies to realise the right to leisure time for everyone in your community. They have one thing in common: different services or organisations need each other to guarantee this right.

The network ‘**Everyone Deserves A Holiday**’ (in Dutch: **Iedereen Verdient Vakantie**) helps people who encounter difficulties to enjoy holidays and leisure time. Many local authorities are network partners and ensure that the right to holiday is realised for all of their residents.

For the past 20 years, the right to leisure for people living in poverty has been addressed through concrete policy measures. Various

practices have been developed to enable participation in sports, youth and culture for people in poverty.

Participation decree and local networks on leisure participation for people in poverty

The Flemish authorities introduced the Participation Decree to further support local networks addressing leisure participation for people living in poverty. In these local or intermunicipal networks the leisure services, the Public Centre for Social Welfare (in Dutch: OCMW) and organisations fighting against poverty take joint action to make leisure accessible for everyone.

In these networks, the partners use different strategies to remove the hurdles that people in poverty experience. For instance, many local networks have a discount system to meet financial barriers. Other local networks additionally focus on guidance, clear communication and on dialogue with and autonomy of people living in poverty. By collaborating with sports clubs for example, a poverty association can create opportunities. Or when the department of culture programs activities, they can involve poverty organisations.

Local authorities who want to establish or extend a local network can call on **Demos**. The Participation Decree gives Demos a specific, supporting role to stimulate local cooperation, vision creation and practice development.



This fact sheet was written in collaboration with Demos and the network ‘Iedereen Verdient Vakantie’.