

## **Serviceclubs in The Netherlands; citizenship in a welfare state?**

By prof. Theo Schuyt, ph.d

Vrije universiteit, Department of Philanthropic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences.

De Boelelaan 1081

1081 HV Amsterdam, The Netherlands

tnm.schuyt@fsw.vu.nl

www.giving.nl

00-31-205986781

Welfare states in Western Europe are in transition. Demographic changes, growing wealth, cultural and political developments at national as well as European level trigger fundamental shifts in economic, social and political institutions. Western Europe is moving into the ongoing process of restructuring: in the meanwhile integrating new East European countries at one hand, coping nationwide with the ethnic diversity challenges at the other. As a result, the transition urges the continuous innovations of governments, businesses and civic efforts to keep Western Europe a prosperous and democratic community to live in. It is the ultimate task to philosophers, authors, scholars and politicians to grasp this transition into a cohesive cultural framework. The pillars of prosperity in the future will be formed by a sustainable economic growth, political democracy and a basic level of social services. Along with the economic and political changes most Western European countries are transforming into so-called “civil societies”. Social services will financially rely on three sources of contributions:

- a. government funding
- b. fees and charges
- c. philanthropy (Salamon and Anheier 1999; 2004).

Especially the last category is getting weight: wealthy individuals, entrepreneurial wealth, bequests, foundations and corporate philanthropy stand for a huge amount of money.

In The Netherlands serviceclubs like Rotarians, Lions, Soroptimists, Ladie’s Circles, Zonta’s are historically committed to citizenship, to civic duty, especially at the community level. Surprisingly they have hardly been investigated as a philanthropic “source”. In neither the “Giving USA” studies, nor the “Giving The Netherlands” studies the philanthropic contributions of these clubs have been considered separately. Moreover, scientific literature on the subject is scarce: Harris, P.P. (1928) *The Founder of Rotary.*; Charles, J.A. (1958). *Serviceclubs in American Society.*

In The Netherlands serviceclubs count for about 50.000 members. For that reason, since September 2005 a research on the 12 serviceclubs has been started.

This study intends to offer a historic-sociological analysis of the roots of serviceclubs, it tries to collect data of the philanthropic contributions (money and time) over the last 50 years and it will compare these civic efforts with the service ideals from the past and with the political context of the Dutch welfare state of today. The study focuses at two questions: 1. What are the basic ideas of serviceclubs and are they still valid in the changing Dutch welfare state?, 2. What is the content of the philanthropic contributions of service organizations?