Welcome







Belgian seniors organization OKRA
70 years young
Alive & kicking

Tom Langmans – OKRA VZW







Good Practices

Herentals Antonius

How do I start from scratch?

Zittaart – Meerhout

Fashion show

Painters – Turnhout

When painting is not the issue

Mol, Ginderbuiten, Achterbos, Donk, Ezaart, …

Coöperation with local government

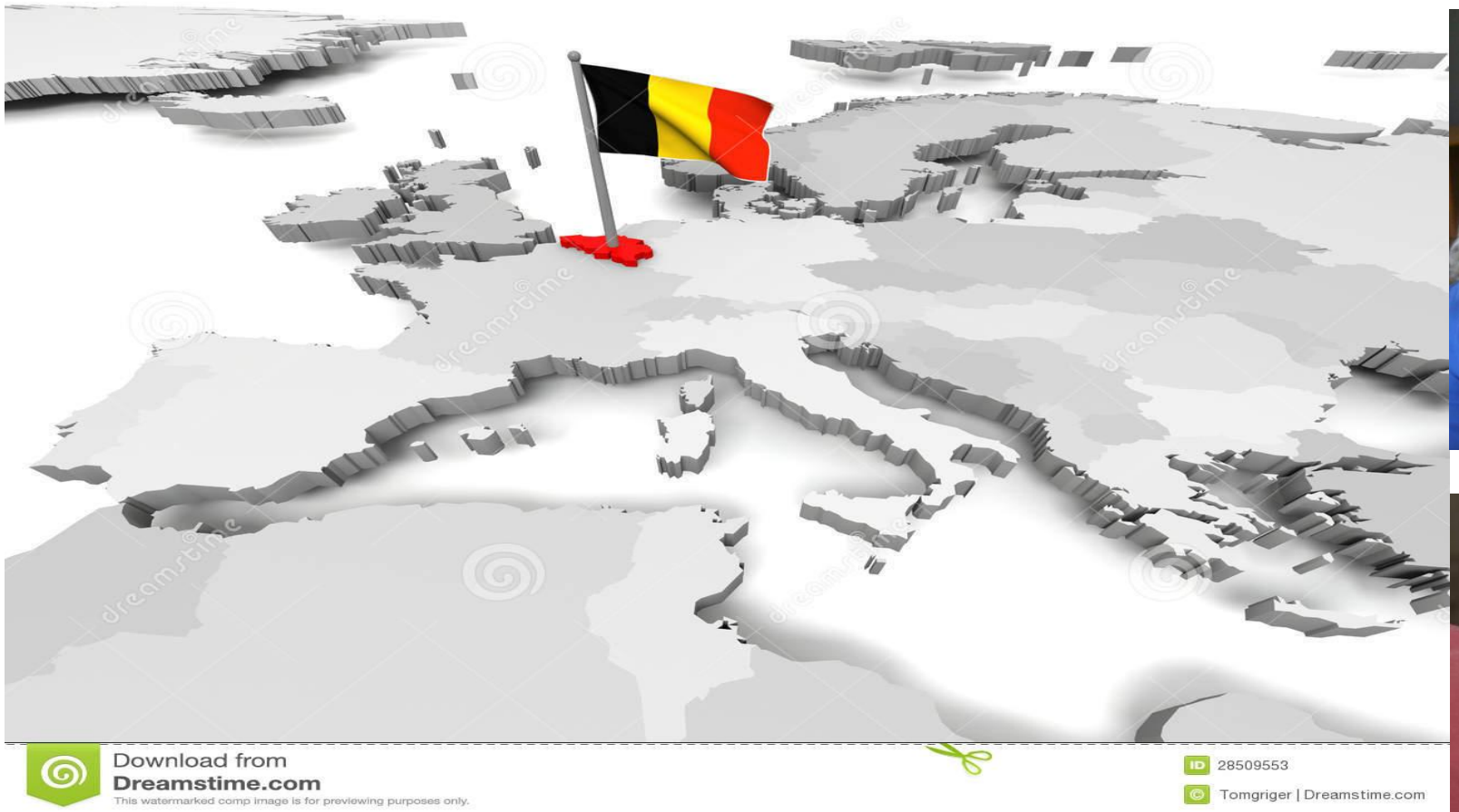
OKRA Poppel

Social restaurant





Belgium, a short introduction







Belgium, a short introduction

- 30.528 km²
- 11.209.000 inhabitants
- Partly Dutch, French and German speaking
- 18% is over 65 years (about 2 mln)
- Overall life expectancy: 82,5 years
    - 84 years 81 years





Belgium, a short introduction

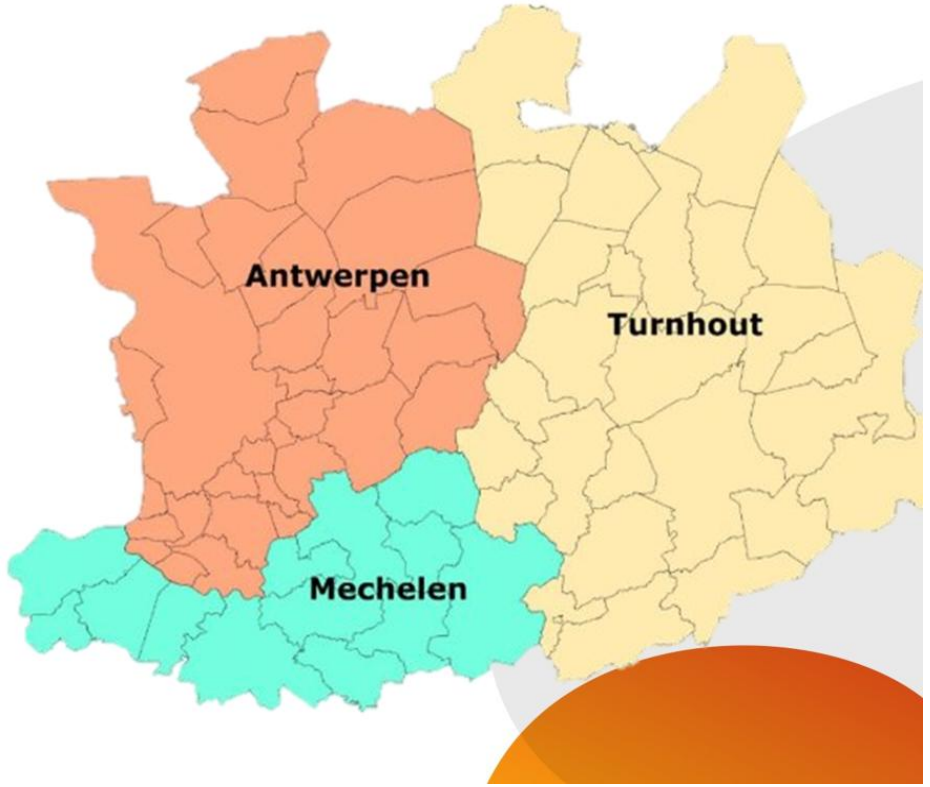
OKRA provincie Antwerpen

Eén provincie

3 kantoren

- Turnhout
- Antwerpen
- Mechelen

6 streekpunten







www.okra.be

OKRA, the beginning

- Social movements fought for a system of income for the elderly
- The health insurance organisations (Belgian Mutualities) helped the elderly in applying for this income. Also gathering information about employment (WW2)
- When talking to the people, all the other problems of the elderly came up
- The health insurance started a specialised organisation for the elderly - OKRA was founded (70 years ago)





OKRA, the beginning

- OKRA started organizing the elderly :
  - OKRA creates opportunities for elderly to meet
  - It was important for elderly to talk about their problems and find companions
  - OKRA started to organize meetings and activities for the elderly (e.g. advocacy for elderly, handcrafts,…)





OKRA, the beginning

By example … Regio Kempen – How it all started …

1/10/1951 – Turnhout

4/10/1951 – Herentals

10/12/1951 – Arendonk

14/12/1951 – Retie

14/12/1951 – Oud-Turnhout

1952 – 9 new groups

1953 – 5 new groups

1954 till 1988 – 104 groups in total.



OKRA - general information

The meaning of the word OKRA:

- O: openess (with an open mind)
- K: Christian (inspiration, driving force)
- R: respect (members, generations, being different
- A: active

OKRA - general information

Key words:

- Volunteers make OKRA
- Self development of elderly (individual and groups)
- Importance of lifelong learning for elderly and keep them informed
- Importance of empowerment of elderly (the group grows stronger)

OKRA - general information

Key statement:

OKRA wants to give elderly the opportunity to participate in social and cultural activities that contribute to their personal development and participation in social life.

OKRA - general information

- ✓ **Flanders (OKRA is not operational in French or German speaking part)**
- ✓ **OKRA** = Socio cultural organisation with more than 12000 volunteers, on different levels
- ✓ 120,000 members
- ✓ 60 staff (40 educational – 20 administration)
- ✓ Local groups (1022 trefpunten) offer a lot of different types of activities
  - Monthly, weekly and even dayly meetings
  - Cultural activities, training, sport-activities, trips, clubs etc.

OKRA - general information

- ✓ **Focus on a local group**
  - ✓ **Trefpunt Arendonk**
    - ✓ **400 members – 25 volunteers**
    - ✓ **Activities: Walking, cycling, dancing, petanque, sports, culture, academy, religion, creativity, travel, eduction and so on.**

✓With volunteers

✓Whithout professionals

OKRA - general information

- ✓ A team of volunteers coordinate the activities of the local groups
  - ✓ ‘Movement means also self-governement and self-organization
- ✓ Information for **all** members (diversity!) + focus on the most vulnerable members (example: mobility issues)
- ✓ Cooperation with similar ‘OKRA’-groups and other organisations
- ✓ Keeping the interests of the members at heart by defending their rightful place in (local)society
  - ✓ Local
  - ✓ National and even international

OKRA - general information

- ✓ Special attention for the weakest members: at home/ residential care home; team-members visit some members at home
- ✓ OKRA-magazine monthly (10 per year)
- ✓ Local groups: work independently … different types of local organisation
- ✓ Region - exchange and cooperation, supra-local activities
- ✓ Through various meetings: aim to inspire the entire organisation
- ✓ … in 2025: attention to innovation, developing new activities,

OKRA - expansion of our movement

✓ Which goals do we have:

- How to find new volunteers (all levels)?
- How to guide a local group?
- How to integrate more diversity into the organization?
- How to reach the ‘new’ generation of ‘older’ people?
- How to cooperate with local authorities and other local organizations?

OKRA –Good Practices

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Valentijn en algemene quiz








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- Questions?
- Suggestions?



Thank you !