



**Introducing:** Bien Hofman, one of Pendrecht's Star Residents.

Pendrecht is a quarter in Rotterdam with issues and problems like so many other Rotterdam neighbourhoods. And not only the Pendrecht quarter as a network of very active and motivated volunteers, who organise numerous activities for the benefit of their community, but Pendrecht has Bien Hofman!

She founded the Resident Organisation: Vitaal Pendrecht and initiated the Pendrecht University, among a longlist of other events and activities. Bien also had a leading role at the R4R-film Resident Experts, portraying 3 active Residents in Antwerp, Birmingham and Rotterdam.

She is one of those bussing people, always running round organising, a head full of ideas, but also a very practical woman who knows what she want and most important, she knows where to get it!



(Bien Hofman (at right) here portrayed with her Pendrecht 'sister')

Five questions for Bien Hofman, initiator and co-founder of the 'Pendrecht University' in Rotterdam.

**1. What is the Pendrecht University and for whom is the University accessible?**

The Pendrecht University is a very special University. It is a University where residents are the professors and the professionals and local governors, will be the students. One of the ground principles of the De Pendrecht University is that we feel that the Resident is the expert concerning every day matters and issues in their communities and neighbourhoods. They know best what issues need attendance and what would be the best way to tackle them. At Pendrecht University they share their knowledge by teaching the professionals.



**2. What progress has been made so far?**

Well it takes a lot of hard work and we are now very busy organising the Pendrecht University, one of the results is a Bid book in which set up, function, goals for future activities and expectations for the Pendrecht University are described into detail. One of our other priorities at the moment is writing a solid business plan and associated budget. We aim at an independent mode of operation. This enables us to function the way enterprises do, so that we are not solely depending on grants. We believe that creative ways of trying to finance your plans and activities will earn a lot more respect from all decision makers involved than just begging for money by holding up your hands. Without this respect I don't think a lot of professionals would be willing to join our lectures, let alone be enthusiastic about it, as we know they are now!

**3. How is the relationship between Pendrecht and Rotterdam City Council?**

We cooperate very well. If I need to speak to one of the local councillors an appointment is easily made. Finding money to finance projects is not always easily fixed, but that is actually a good thing. That way we are sure that no unnecessary community money is spent.

**4. When will the Pendrecht University start?**

Actually the Pendrecht University has already started giving lectures, some time ago now. For our very first lecture given February 19, 2005 we invited Professor Talja Blokland, professor of community development at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam. The official launch of the Pendrecht University took place on December 18, 2007. That day our Bid book was presented by Mr. Pieter Tops (professor public administration and member of Board committee of Police officers in Apeldoorn).

**5. What is the Pendrecht University aiming at? And what plans are there for the near future?**

The Pendrecht University is aiming to give residents acknowledgement and validation of their 'street wise' knowledge. The residents give lectures to teach professional how to get in touch with active residents, what is going on in the neighbourhoods. Professionals have also indicated and asked residents for an update of their knowledge; this was already brought into practice with lecture about safety issues in neighbourhoods. The expert residents provide tools and tricks for the professionals to implement in a practical way of working with and for residents. It may involve some getting used too, but in general the idea of residents teaching professionals is very well and enthusiastically received.

Our future goal is to make sure that the most competent people chair the faculties. They will hopefully set a good touchstone for other residents. We strive for an expanding group of residents confident enough to give lectures at our Pendrecht Uni.

And last but not least, I hope that once we have found a suitable building to house the Pendrecht University that our example will be followed by other areas and neighbourhood in Rotterdam and maybe even in other cities besides Rotterdam.



For more information look at: [www.vitaalpendrecht.nl](http://www.vitaalpendrecht.nl)