

Where Filipinos find 'home' in the Netherlands



PHOTOS: MYRA COLIS

BY MYRA COLIS

Filipinos worldwide are known for their friendliness, hospitality and cheerfulness towards fellow Filipinos and foreigners alike. For Filipinos who really want to connect, building new circles of friends and acquaintances in a foreign country can come naturally.

For a span of 9 years in China, I'd made friends with more or less only 15 Filipinos! In the Netherlands, however, I've already met and known more than a hundred Filipinos in just 2 years here! What made this huge difference? Unlike my experience in China, one can find many active Philippine organisations in the Netherlands that both new comers and old timers can call a place like home.

Where Philippine connections begin

The Philippines is the 5th largest Christian country and the 3rd largest Catholic country in the world. So it's no surprise that more than 15% of the listed Filipino organisations in the Netherlands are religious groups, including the *Filipino Catholic Community*, *Jesus is Lord* and the *Word International Ministries*. In Christian communities, this is where Filipinos start to develop strong bonding. This connection typically leads to formation of socially oriented activities like community picnics in celebration of the Philippine Independence Day or fundraising events for victims of natural calamities in the Philippines. Notably, every Filipino gathering comes with *salu-salo* (means eating together).

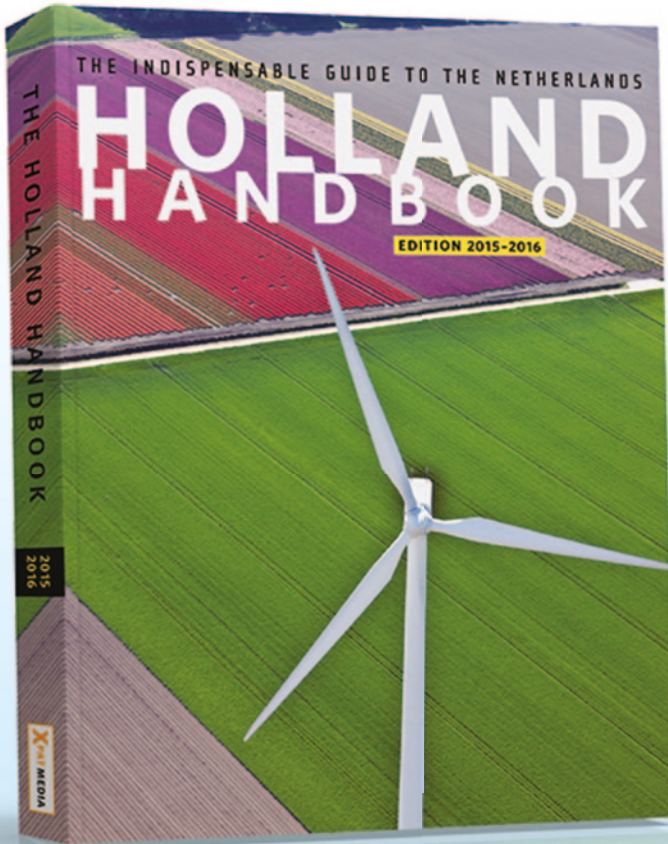
Empowering Philippine women for over 20 years

Of about 18,600 first and second generation Filipinos in the Netherlands, more than 80% are women. In 1991, the *Stichting Bayanihan* (Philippine Women's Centre in the Netherlands) was established to advance the participation, integration and emancipation of Filipinas through social service and orientation trainings on the rights of women and migrants, domestic violence, intercultural communication and upbringing of children.

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In fact, Bayanihan currently serves as a social cultural counsellor to relevant Dutch institutions such as *Jeudgzorg* and *Zorginstellingen*, acting as support, cultural communicator and bridge to *kababayans* (fellow Filipino) whose children were taken out from their homes. It also received the *Banaag* (bright light) Award in 2012, the Presidential Award for Filipino »

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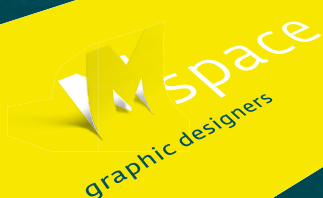
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Community | Where Filipinos find 'home' in the Netherlands

Individuals and Organisations Overseas, and was commended for its work on ensuring the well-being of Filipino au pairs and marriage migrants in the Netherlands. In April 2014, Bayanihan's Seniors Group was formed to provide the same service for the Filipino seniors.

LSE: a new home for aspiring Filipino leaders and social entrepreneurs

LSE stands for 'Leadership and Social Entrepreneurship', the two cornerstones of a 6-month, non-for-profit, empowerment programme for Filipino migrants and overseas workers.

The LSE Netherlands was launched in September 2013. To complete the programme, participants must prepare and present a business plan to a panel of experts by the end of the course. LSE attracts participants of all ages and diverse backgrounds with 41 graduates in 2014 and nearly 40 enrollees this year.

These are few of the many 'homes' for Filipinos in the Netherlands. To further connect with the community, Filipinos en masse are celebrating the Philippine



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Did you know...
There are over 10 million Filipino migrants worldwide (10% of the Philippine population).

Independence Day this summer at Spaarnwoude Houtrak on [June 6th](#) and at Den Haag's Zuiderpark on the 13th. When craving for Philippine delicacies simply drop by at [Baryo Pilipinas](#) restaurant or check out fresh Philippine produce made available in the Netherlands by [Sarap Pinoy](#). «

About the author

Myra Colis is a Filipino migrant and entrepreneur. She arrived in 2012 and founded [E3 Data Intelligence Services](#), offering market research services and organising educational training events. She is also on the Board of [Stichting Bayanihan](#) and the [LSE Secretariat Team](#).