



AFSAI

NATIONAL PROFILE

SOME BASIC INFORMATION
TO PREPARE YOURSELF
TO THE VOLUNTARY PERIOD IN
ITALY

Programme Year 2010-2011

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FOREWORD

Dear friends and future volunteers!

We are the Italian national committee of the International Cultural Youth Exchange Federation, although our name sounds different from the majority of the other national committees' denomination.

Our name is AFSAI, which is the acronym for Associazione per la Formazione, gli Scambi e le Attività Interculturali (Italian for Association for Education, Exchanges and Intercultural Activities) and we joined ICYE in 1978.

The information about Italy and AFSAI you will find herewith we hope may help you to realize the right approach to the exchange year in our country.

This National Profile, though not a complete survey of Italian history and present situation, will provide you with some general information and some practical indications about either AFSAI or Italy.

You will have information about Italian families, the communities' social life as well as a short presentation on how AFSAI is working, who are the people in the National Coordination Office in Rome and what the structure of our national committee is.

We are sure you will find this National Profile very useful and we suggest you to read it very carefully: any explanation you may need, do not hesitate to contact us for further information.

Previous volunteers' experiences show how important it is to get clear ideas on what you may expect from the year you will spend in Italy.

This National Profile is also designed in order for you to know how much and what you will be able to gain and not, during your exchange year.

So we wish you a good reading.

The warmest welcome from all AFSAI volunteers and staffs.

Last editing: November 2009

Layout: November 2009

SOME FACTS ABOUT ITALY

Italy is a peninsula whose coasts are washed by the Adriatic sea to the East, by the Ionic sea to the South, the Ligurian sea to the North-West and the Tyrrhenian sea to the West. The Italian coastline is 7,420 kilometers long.

*Geographical
and socio-
political
hints*

Area: 301,268 square km (35,2% mountains, 41,6% hills, 23,2% plains).

Population: around 59.000.000 inhabitants.

Capital Town: Rome (ca. 4.000.000 inhabitants).

Language: Italian, which is the direct continuation of Latin and, in its present-day form, is a development of the Tuscany language (13th and 14th centuries).

Monetary Unit: Euro (more information on the currency on the web site http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/the_euro/).

Paper currency: There are 7 euro notes. In different colors and size they are denominated in 500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5 euros. The notes will be uniform throughout the euro area; unlike coins, they will have no national side. The designs are symbolic for Europe's architectural heritage.

Coins: There are 8 euro coins denominated in 2 and 1 euros, then 50, 20, 10, 5, 2, and 1 cents. Every euro coin will carry a common European face.

Religion: Almost totally roman catholic but many other religions exist in Italy. The Lateran Pact regulates relations between the Italian State and the Vatican City.

Political System: the Italian State is a democratic parliamentary republic with universal suffrage. Parliament consists of two branches: the House of Deputies and the Senate. The State is divided administratively into 20 regions, 103 provinces and 8.086 townships. Fifteen regions have ordinary status and five have a special one that means they enjoy autonomous status. Italy is a founding member of the European Union (UE).

Most Important Cities: Torino, Milano, Como, Brescia, Verona, Trento, Bolzano, Venezia, Trieste, Genova, Parma, Bologna, Firenze, Siena, Pisa, Ancona, Pescara, Perugia, Roma, L'Aquila, Napoli, Salerno, Bari, Brindisi, Taranto, Potenza, Reggio Calabria, Messina, Catania, Palermo, Cagliari, Sassari.

Neighbours: France to the West, Switzerland to the North-West, Austria to the North-East, Slovene to the East.

Topography and climate: Italy has many topographical regions, but the most important are the Alps to the North, the Po Valley also to the North and the Apennines that divide the peninsula vertically in two parts. The highest mountain is the Monte Bianco (4.810 m.); the main rivers flow mostly in the North and are: Po, Tanaro, Adda, Ticino, Adige, Piave, Arno and, in the center, Tevere. We have also two lakes regions: one to the North composed by glacial lakes like Lago Maggiore, Lago di Garda, Lago di Como, Lago d'Iseo, and the other in the Center composed by volcanic lakes like Lago Trasimeno, Lago di Bracciano, Lago di Bolsena. There are several active volcanoes in Italy: Etna, the largest active volcano in Europe; Vulcano; Stromboli; and Vesuvius, the only active volcano on the mainland of Europe

As far as climate is concerned, Italy can be divided in the following regions:

Alps (Cuneo, Aosta, Sondrio, Trento, Bolzano, Udine): long and cold winters, short summers. Considerable difference in temperature between day and night. Snow in winter, sometimes rainy during the summer. Min. temp. in winter around -10°C.; max. temp. in summer about +30°C.;

Po Valley (Torino, Milano, Alessandria, Novara, Mantova, Verona, Brescia, Bergamo, Como etc.): cold winters and warm summers; often foggy between November and March and rather humid during the summer. It rains around October and April. Snow in winter. Min. temp. in winter around -5°C.; max. temp. in summer around +35°C.;

Northern Adriatic Coast (Trieste, Venezia, Ancona, Pescara): the Adriatic sea is not very deep and has little influence on the climate of the region, which is similar to the climate of the Po Valley, even if less foggy and more windy. Min. temp. in winter around -5°C.; max. temp. in summer around +30°C.;

Apennines (Perugia, Terni, L'Aquila, Campobasso, Benevento, Potenza): these mountains are lower than the Alps and therefore enjoy longer and warmer summers. Snow in winter. Rain, specially on the western side. Min. temp. in winter -3°C.; max. temp. in summer +30°C.;

Northern Tyrrhenian Coast (Genova, La Spezia, Pisa, Firenze, Roma, Napoli): practically no snow in winter -with some rear exceptions-; it rains often between October and March and very rarely during the other months. Long and pleasant falls and springs. Sometimes windy. Min. temp. in winter +5°C.; max. temp. in summer +35°C.;

Southern Mediterranean Coasts and Islands (Bari, Brindisi, Taranto, Reggio Calabria, Sicilia and Sardegna): the difference between summer and winter is less relevant than in other parts of Italy. Short rainy winters, long and warm falls and springs, some hot weeks during summers. The temperature on the mountains of Sicily and Sardinia is similar to the temperature on the Apennines. Min. temp. in winter +8°C.; max. temp. in summer +37°C.

SOME HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Italian history is very complex dating back to 2.500 years ago and, so forth, it could be not told in few lines.

Historical hints

However, we will try to concentrate some information about recent history starting from 1860 when, for the first time, Italy was known as unified state with -more or less- the same boundaries it has nowadays.

1860	Declaration of unification of Italy under the Savoia's monarchy (northern pattern of administration, capital Turin).
1915-1918	First World War (about 600.000 dead).
1922-1943	Fascism.
1940-1945	Second World War.
1946	Fall of the monarchy and foundation of the Italian Republic.
1947-1967	Economic boom (i.e. disorderly economic growth).
1967-1969	Beginning of crisis: workers strikes, students' demonstrations, general crisis of values commonly accepted.
1969-1974	Attempts made by various groups to create a situation of general chaos, leading to a process of restoration: bombs in a bank in Milano, bombs in trains of leftist workers, bombs in Italicus train, bombs against workers' meeting protesting against neo-fascism.

1975-1977	Birth of some guerrilla groups inside the most radical leftist groups: Brigate Rosse and other minor groups.
1977	Birth of Women's Liberation Movements: theorization of identity between "personal" and "political" life.
1978	Kidnapping and assassination of Aldo Moro, President of the Christian Democratic Party. All parties in Parliament (excluding the Radicals and the extreme left) voted in favor of temporary emergency measures. Some of them are still valid.
August 1980	Fascist bomb in Bologna railway station
1980-1983	<p>Normalization of political life, the tension created by political terrorism is fading gradually. Mostly in the South the "organized crime", i.e. Mafia and Camorra, increased the influence on the social and political life of certain areas; inflation, unemployment (12%), political scandals are the issues mostly debated and with no immediate solution.</p> <p>After the national political elections in June, a new government was formed by a coalition of five parties and, for the first time since 1947, the Prime Minister was a socialist, Bettino Craxi.</p>
1983-1987	Under the Craxi Government, Italy reached a stable economical situation. We succeeded in entering the Club of the Seven More Industrialized Countries. Notwithstanding this, social and political disorders are still present as a signal of social malaise: students and workers demonstrations, feeble attempts to rebuild the terrorist groups. This due to the fact that the economical growth wasn't a totally fair one: mainly the upper class benefited by it.
1987-1990	<p>National political election to vote a new Parliament and to form a new Government. For the first time the Green Movement is represented in the Italian Parliament.</p> <p>After the social and political revolutions in Eastern European Countries, the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) the biggest one in the West, started a new period of its history, deciding to rename itself, to renounce Marxism and to constitute a new party (called Democratic Party of the Left or PDS).</p>
1990-1993	These years are characterized by a general lack of trust in the parties' political system. Several political scandals, still not clear, caused a gap between the parties' political system and the people. After the last general election of April 1992 the Court of Milano has discovered a net of corrupted politicians who have been misusing the public money for their own and of their parties interests. This action has been shaking the Government coalition parties which have been ruling Italy almost for the last 40 years.
1993-1996	<p>At the end of 1993 the electoral system has changed: both houses of the bicameral parliament are elected under a mixed system - $\frac{3}{4}$ by majority vote in constituencies and $\frac{1}{4}$ by direct proportional representation.</p> <p>This change aims to decrease the number of small political parties, trying to define three main political forces: Right-wing, Left-wing and Center.</p> <p>The political elections of March 27-28, 1994 were won by a coalition of the Right-wing forces whose leaders were Berlusconi, Bossi and Fini. This coalition chose Berlusconi as Prime Minister. But in December 1994 the Government formed by Berlusconi fell and the President of the Republic gave the mandate to form a new one, composed only by "technical" minister, to Lamberto Dini. Actually this new Government has the function to resolve some urgent points of the Italian policy, in order to give to the population the possibility to have new elections under the sign of equality and justice.</p>
1996-1997	The Dini Government has fallen. We had new elections on April 21st, 1996. The actual government is formed by a leftist coalition. The Prime Minister is Romano Prodi.
1997-1998	Thanks to the efforts made by the Italian population and Prodi government in balancing our economical accounts, Italy should join from the beginning the European Single Currency.
1998-1999	In May 1999 the tenth President of the Italian Republic has been elected by the Parliament. His name is Carlo Azeglio Ciampi
2000	The entrance in the Millennium has so Italy changing two different Government from the left wing. D'Alema has been the Premier in the first part of the year, afterward has been appointed Amato, who ended the legislature.
2001-2006	Since May 2001, Silvio Berlusconi has been the Premier.

2006	Since April 2006 Romano Prodi is the new premier and Mr. Napolitano is the new President of the Italian Republic.
2006-2008	After a crisis inside the majority the Prodi's government follow down. In the election of 2008 the right coalition won so since April Silvio Berlusconi is again the new premier.
2009	After a series of personal scandals connected to the private sphere and several tentative to reform the juridical Italian system Silvio Berlusconi is still the Prime Minister. The international world crisis has of course touched Italy too even if it seems, till now, with a lower impact compared to other EU countries.

It would be very useful if you can read more information on the socio-political situation in Italy before you come, in order to be able to follow the political discussions which are very common in everyday life. These information are available by the Italian Cultural Institutes (Istituti di Cultura Italiana) which are usually present in each State.

*Italian
Cultures
Institutes*

WHAT IS AFSAI

AFSAI is the acronym for Associazione per la Formazione, gli Scambi e le Attività Interculturali and it's the Italian branch of ICYE.

Although *AFSAI* has been existing in Italy for nearly 50 years, being founded in 1958, the exchange program within the ICYE Federation started in 1978.

Before 1978 the association was exchanging with AFS (the former meaning of our name was "AFS Association Italy"). Since 1978 *AFSAI* has improved and changed a lot the internal structure as well as the programs that it promotes.

*Foundation in
1958, within
ICYE
Federation
since 1978*

Nowadays the organization is formed by 13 local chapters spread out all over the nation. Each chapter has a contact person or coordinator, to whom you should turn to first when you have a question or a problem.

The local chapters are formed mostly by volunteers who have been former volunteers and know the volunteers' problems from their own experiences. The local groups plan meetings where you can meet the other volunteers of your region, the volunteers and the host-families and where you can share ideas, experiences and discuss problems.

*Local
chapter*

On national level *AFSAI* is run by the Board of Managers (in Italian *Consiglio di Amministrazione*, often abbreviated in *CdA*) formed by five to nine members who are elected for a three years term. Among them the chairperson of the association is chosen. The CdA meets five times per year, in order to discuss the main issues of the association and to decide on financial matters and about questions related to our programs.

*Board of
Managers*

The present Board of Managers (as per the election held at the 1995 General Assembly) is composed of the following people:

President:	Mr. Massimiliano Viatore	(Triggiano, BA)
Vice-president:	Mrs. Daniela Lapenna	(Monopoli, BA)
Treasurer:	Mr. Roberto Vinciguerra	(Roma, RM)
Member:	Mr. Matteo Leoni	(Arco, TN)
Member:	Mr Valerio Pellirossi	(Anzio, RM)

The members of the CdA are elected by the *AFSAI* General Assembly (in Italian *Assemblea Generale dei Soci AFSAI*) that meets annually, usually in Spring. All members of the association (volunteers, paid-staff, host-families etc.) have the right to participate to the Assembly and to vote if they pay the annual membership's fee. Also the volunteers can attend the General Assembly.

*General
Assembly*

The National Coordination Office (in Italian *Ufficio di Coordinamento Nazionale*, often abbreviated in *UdCN*) located in Rome, is in charge of the administration work of *AFSAI*, receives the applications forms of incoming volunteers and hosting situations and coordinates the placements, organizes the advertising campaign and the preparation of outgoing volunteers and plans the national meetings for volunteers and those for coworkers. The UdCN works in strict and constant relation with the local chapters and takes care of both the national and international relations, keeping in touch with the other ICYE National Committees, the International Office in Berlin, the Italian Embassies abroad, just to mention some examples.

*National
Coordinator
Office*

AFSAI , beside the annual exchange program within the ICYE Federation, organizes other intercultural programs such as short-term exchanges for groups of young people within Europe, training courses for youth workers in the field of intercultural youth exchanges and many others. Since 1996 AFSAI is fully involved in EVS (European Voluntary Service).

All the work related to the organization of these activities is done also by the UdCN.

*Short term
group
exchanges,
volunteers'
exchanges,
training
courses*

WHO'S WHO IN THE NATIONAL COORDINATION OFFICE OF *AFSAI*

MASSIMILIANO VIATORE



Born in Triggiano (BA) in 1967.
 He has been working in the local chapter of his city, Bari, for two years.
 He started to work in the UdCN in September 1993 carrying out different responsibilities. He is the director.

Director

CUCA MASET



Born in Madrid (Spain) in 1967.

She has been involved with ICYE for the last six years. She has been staff volunteer in the ICYE office in New York, staff member in AEC Spain and has spent two years abroad in Ireland and Germany.
 She started to work in the UdCN in December 1996 and she is presently the Responsible person for *AFSAI* short term exchanges with the EU Commission.

Coordinator
 of the
 Program
 International
 Youth
 Activities

SARA VANNELLI



Born in Rome in 1979.

She has been an EVS volunteer in 2002-2003 in Scotland. When she came back to Italy she co-operated with *AFSAI* several times, taking part in international seminars, trainings and short term exchanges.

Since July 2003 she is responsible of the International Youth Volunteering for the Hosting projects.

International
 Youth
 Volunteering
 Programmes
 Responsible
 for Hosting
 projects

AURORA CARUSO



Born in Rome in 1980.

She has a degree in communication sciences. In 2004 she has been worked in Ireland for an organization of cultural events. After an internship in the Centre for the vocational education's development in Greece and a master's degree in Europlanning she started to work in *AFSAI* in the 2007.

She is responsible of the International Youth Volunteers for the Sending projects since January 2008.

EVS
 Program
 Responsible
 for Sending
 projects



AFSAI NATIONAL and LOCAL STRUCTURE

AFSAI National Coordination Office (UdCN) is located near the center of Rome, not far from one of the most beautiful parks of the town, Villa Doria Pamphili. The address is:

*Almost all
over the
country*

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Telefax: (+39/6) 5820.1442

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Web page: www.afsai.it

AFSAI local chapters are present almost all over the country. They are formed by volunteers, both returnees from a voluntary period abroad and young people interested in our programs.

*Group of
young people*

The chapters are mainly formed by a group of young people that have experienced directly a long term period of voluntary service abroad.

You can turn to our volunteers always when you have problems that you can not solve by yourself or when you need some advice about the activities you can do in your city, beside the school or the social work. However you should keep in mind that the volunteers are working with you and not just for you. This means that you may not expect from them to solve all your problems or to be always present for you.

*Advice and
support, not
just problem
solving*

For many of them to work with *AFSAI* means to integrate their daily activities (study, work, etc.) with a voluntary job that is based on a friendly and honest relation with the volunteers. You should not expect from them to organize things for you, but on the contrary you should be the one who proposes activities to do together.

*Voluntary
work*

It is necessary that you have a lot of self-initiative throughout all your voluntary period abroad, in order to be able to work in a stimulating way with your local chapter.

*A lot of self
initiative*

HOW DO YOU PREPARE YOURSELF TO THE VOLUNTARY PERIOD IN ITALY

The month preceding your departure from your country and from your family should be dedicated to prepare yourself both spiritually and technically to your experience. Here we include some of the topics on which we believe you should reflect during that period.

*Prepare both
spiritually
and
technically*

Language

It is extremely important to learn some few fundamentals of the Italian language before departing your home country.

This will able you to learn the language much faster, and to communicate with Italians in general without miming too much, which is all right at the real beginning but it is frustrating and useless when it comes to expressing feelings.

We recommend that you go out and look up in the library of your school or in a bookshop if you can borrow or buy some books to study your new language. From the very beginning you should spend at least two hours a day studying Italian. If you have done this, you will be able to improve greatly your expressing power and you should be able to make yourself understood as soon as you get into your hosting placement.

*Make
yourself
understood*

At the beginning, and for a number of weeks, you will naturally and obviously miss most of the conversation around you: this happens to every volunteer and therefore you should not feel depressed because of this failure to communicate. Remember that it is not important what you do not understand, but what you do understand: everyday you will learn something new. Learning our language should not be considered as a dreadful task, but as a pleasant game, where you try to use all the expressions you have heard till they belong to you. There is nothing you can loose, you can only gain. If you make a mistake, everybody will laugh and you will have another funny story for your conversation later in the year. And to talk and talk and talk as much as possible.

*Not a
dreadful
task, but a
pleasant
game*

Talking must become something natural and pleasant, as it is for the Italians.

Do You Really Know Your Country?

Another thing you should do before your departure is to know something more about your country. The world has become so small that many questions will be asked to you about the social and political structure of your country. There will be several occasions during your stay in Italy in which you will try to discuss with people, and in order to be able to express your opinions clearly you have to base your reasoning on facts much more than you are used to. It would be very unfortunate if you found out too late that most of your believes are not based on facts but on the contrary, that they are the outcome of the prevailing opinions of the persons with whom you have been in contact (your family, your teachers, your friends...). It would be so difficult, when you are in Italy to make people understand you if you talk in clichés, since they can be understood only in the very place where they were created.

*Many
questions
about the
social and
political
structure of
your country*

So before you leave, you should submit your believes to an accurate control. You see, the more you understand the reasons why you have come to certain conclusions, the easier it will be for you to make people understand them! So before you begin to fill up your mind with new information, try to create a more solid basis for your convictions. In doing this you might ask for the help of a qualified person in your town who should be able to suggest some books to read and who would also be willing to discuss with you some of the matter about which you might have some questions.

*Submit your
believe to an
accurate
control*

Your Attitude

Even more important than being well informed about the situation existing in your country is the attitude you will assume in your contacts with people. It is necessary that you begin to reflect on this matter from this moment, since sometimes your *natural reaction* may not be very appropriate.

*Your natural
reaction
may not be
very
appropriate*

Above everything else you must forget that you are a citizen of your country, as much as believing that certain attitudes or thoughts are required simply because you belong to a certain country. On any occasion during your stay in which you are going to be in contact with other people, you should not act as an ambassador of your Nation: you must act as yourself.

*You must act
as yourself*

It may be that people will turn to you as a foreigner, but you should try to make them feel all the time, always with the most polite manners, that you are, before anything else, a person and that the fact that you were born in another country is of secondary importance. If you find out that people are more happy when you turn to them as a person, you will also find out that they are angry with you if you go around spreading the 'glory' of your nation, it does not matter what their political ideas are.

*The fact
that you
were born in
another
country is of
secondary
importance*

In this case, they will not understand or learn anything about you and your country, and they might get even an opinion which is exactly the opposite of what you were trying to convince them.

WHAT WE ARE EXPECTING FROM YOU

Every year more than 30 million tourists visit Italy. The majority of them comes back home satisfied, after having enjoyed our sun and our art treasures. But their contact with our culture and with our way of living is very superficial.

*Superficial
contacts*

You will be more fortunate than all of them. You will be given the opportunity to get an intimate understanding of the life in our country, of the historical and cultural heritage of the Italian people.

*An intimate
understanding
of the life
in Italy*

Try not to forget that such understanding will not come to you naturally. Of course, by being exposed to new things you will be naturally inclined to ask questions and to search for the motivations behind a different way of living. This is not, however, an easy task. It will require of you some sacrifice. Knowledge is never acquired by examining only the surface of things, on the contrary it is a matter of constant care and orientation directed to grasping the inner significance of our actions and of the actions of the others.

Remember, therefore, that it is essential that you get rid of preconceived opinions and that you come with an open mind. Or rather: since you cannot know what is a "preconceived opinion" till you have experienced a different way of thinking, you should at least understand that your environment has thought you certain social and mental habits that, though fully reasonable and acceptable for you, are not a pattern equally followed by all countries and people of the world.

*It is
essential you
get rid of
preconceived
opinions*

You will have an easier experience, if you realize that your habits are a product of your environment and can be worthless in another country. With this attitude, you will be able to accept what is new, without judging. And along the same line of thought, you will be able to understand opinions different from yours, and even feel sympathetic with people who express them, without losing your identity.

*Able to
understand
opinions
different
from yours*

This also implies that even when you face a different way of doing things, you should be ready to try it, rather than to impose your way on others. And if you do not understand why people do things differently from you, never be afraid to ask and find out. You must adopt this attitude not only when you arrive, but through your entire experience. If knowing something, *having an opinion on something*, means to penetrate to the core of the thing, and this is a long and difficult task, you should not draw any conclusions before a very long time after your arrival.

*Ready to try
it*

But there is something else connected with your capacity of learning: your capacity of giving. What other people give to you (friendliness, respect, understanding and care) often is a direct outcome of what you are giving to them. If you fail in this, if you cannot really open yourself in your relationship with other people, then all of your other aims will be more difficult to obtain.

*Your
capacity of
giving*

Of course at the beginning, and also later on during your stay, there will be occasions in which between you and your friends and between you and the other members of the host placement some misunderstandings will arise....

You should by no means consider this a failure on your part.

Since it happens many times that even people who have been living together for a very long time do not "understand" each other, it is quite probable that there may be some lack of understanding between you and your new environment, when you are just learning to know each other. But what is important when this happens is that you discuss your misunderstandings openly and frankly (but always with respect for the opinion of the other person) particularly when failure to do this might worsen your relationship with the involved people.

*Discuss your
misunderstandings
openly and
frankly*

Another thing to keep in mind is that not everybody is going to be sensitive to your needs. The people you meet are not strangers in their country, they all have their friends, and they may not even be particularly interested in getting to know you. So, do not expect that just because you are friendly everybody else will want to be friendly with you. Many times the response of people is slow or does not come immediately. In such a case the worse mistake you could make is to consider it your own fault and not merely as an unhappy episode.

*Many times
the response
of people is
slow or
never comes*

In the following pages, we will attempt to point out some of the specific problems you might meet during your stay and some of the answers we suggest for them. There are, of course, several other ways of matching with these problems if they arise, so you should try to work out, with our help or with the help of your local chapter, the ones more suitable for your personality. We want to be certain just of one thing: do not overestimate

*Do not
overestimate
e nor
underestimate*

nor underestimate them.

AFSAI PLACEMENTS

In Italy volunteers are placed both in Northern and Southern Italy as well as in the two main islands: Sardinia and Sicily.

Both North and South

Many volunteers prefer to live in certain city or in big towns, but we will not take into account candidates willing to be placed only in a certain region or city, because in our opinion it is not important where you will spend your voluntary period abroad but how you will integrate in our society. Both faces of our country (*North and South, the big cities and the small villages*) show what life in Italy is. In fact most volunteers are placed in villages, so you should not expect to spend your year in a big city only because you think it is better.

Many volunteers are placed in little towns

Volunteers refusing their placement because of the geographical location or size of town, will not be accepted, as it states the AFSAI overall policy.

AFSAI accepts applicants from 18 to 30 years old, but exceptions for older applicants are possible. The volunteers usually have community placement and social work activities.

18 to 30 years old volunteers

Placements in Italy are possible in alternative living situation (community). Placements in host families are very rare and possible only in very exceptional cases. It is very helpful for us, when we are looking for your placement, to know as much as possible about you: your preferences, likes and dislikes. We advise you to spend some time before coming to Italy, thinking about what you want to achieve during this year and which are your goals.

Social community placements

It is also very important that you come to Italy willing to really do something during the year and that you will be open to new situations which might be very different from what you are used to in your country. Also remember that the projects, which you will be involved with, expect that you bring with you an attitude of responsibility. They expect you to take work and school very seriously! Therefore we ask volunteers to remain in the same social community for the whole year.

Stay in the same placement for the whole year

COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL WORK PLACEMENTS: THE VOLUNTARY PROGRAM

Communities and social work placements

Communities and social work placements are a very important part of the hosting program offered by AFSAI .

To live and to work in a community means to be deeply involved in the work carried out and implies a great deal of willingness to learn something concrete and useful for your future from the philosophy beyond this life-style. Therefore we expect volunteers to be very independent, open-minded and ready to learn from the completely new situation you are going to experience.

*Independent,
open-minded
and ready to
learn*

When you live in a community placement, you should be aware that this implies to work seriously for a certain amount of hours everyday together with the other volunteers and that your free time has to be decided accordingly to the wishes and requests of the other members. It must be kept in mind that many communities are self-founded and have a simple structure; if they apply to host an volunteer is because they need your active and unbroken contribution to their work and activities. Therefore we ask volunteers to stay all the year in the same placement.

*Your active
and unbroken
contribution*

Jobs are very different: to look after children, elderly people, people with physical and learning disabilities, to live and work together with drug addicted etc. For more detailed information see. *The voluntary program's* chapter (a few pages ahead), about the voluntary work placements and the booklet "Voluntary Work: Placements in Italy". This enclosure describes the placements in Communities that AFSAI can offer you, in order to help you to better understand the kind of engagement required and the volunteer's role inside a project.

*List of
placements'
description*

All the volunteers who take part in the voluntary program will receive their placement at the beginning of the Orientation. We matured this decision because the European volunteers, cause of the EVS program requirements, get all the information regarding their placement before arriving, so we think that all volunteers should know it as well. During the Orientation you will receive more detailed information, both from AFSAI and the responsible people of the communities, that will visit us and also during the first weeks in your definitive hosting placement.

*You will
know your
placement at
the
beginning of
the
Orientation*

Since the community members have been living together for a while, it may be a bit difficult to enter an already existing group. In such a case it is up to you to break first asking questions not only about things and habits, but also about more important matters, or suggesting activities to do together in the free time. Whatever the situation in the community may be, it is your job to establish a close relationship with the other persons living in, sharing the daily life and all problems connected to it: you should never exclude yourself from the rest of the community.

*Never
exclude
yourself
from the
rest of the
community*

Living together in a big group is often not easy and changes and improvements are not so sudden. You will find out that it requires a great deal of maturity, insight and sensibility to be a good companion and a true friend to a complete stranger. Be patient, if someone seems to fail sometimes, and above all, help them to fulfill this task by trying yourself to act in a true friendly and sincerely manner.

Since 1996 the European Commission has been running a project, called "European Voluntary Service". This project allows only European youngsters, aged between 18 and 30, to do voluntary work in another member country for a period of 2- 12 months, giving them financial support for the whole period. The European volunteers will know their placement in advance.

*The
European
Voluntary
Service
(EVS)*

The voluntary program

The decision to experience a year of voluntary work in a foreign country, requires an open-mindedness that allows to adapt also to work situations that could not be foreseen before your arrival in Italy. Experience taught us that a positive outcome of the voluntary period abroad does not depend necessarily on the type of social work that the volunteer is doing, but on his/her commitment.

*Doing
voluntary
work*

We are convinced that commitment, flexibility and motivation to help people less fortunate than we are, create the basis to get as much as possible out the 365 days you will live in a different context than what you are used to.

The description that follows will try to show you what does it mean to have the opportunity to do social and voluntary work in Italy.

Volunteers are placed in the *Alternative Living Situations (Communities)*, that are projects where you live in and work with

Placements

Before to explain to you with more details what areas are covered by the voluntary program, we would like to stress the following:

*Take the
work very
seriously*

- *AFSAI* gives you the chance to experience the Italian society, getting a deep insight into it through social and voluntary work. Therefore it is important that you take the project work very seriously and that you approach this new experience in a very adaptable and flexible way.

You will not become acquainted to the project's life if you are not really willing to integrate into it. To get a good knowledge of our society it is necessary to work regularly and continuously in the project, therefore do not expect to change placement every two months. Projects expect volunteers to act very frankly, with sense of responsibility and to be tolerant and flexible;

- the work you will do within the projects is on a voluntary base.

*Voluntary
base*

Do not expect to receive money for the work you do. Usually the project itself will give you the pocket-money to cover your own expenses; it can happen that the project does not have the economical possibility to pay you this small contribution. In this case *AFSAI* will provide you with the pocket-money.

- Do not expect to receive a work permit.

We invite you to write us as much as possible about your previous experiences, your expectations from the project, your personality and your wishes.

*Write us in
advance*

It will be better also if you write us well in advance about the activities you are interested in, describing us the former experiences about voluntary work you have had.

These information will be for us very helpful in order to select for you the most suitable project.

DESCRIPTION OF VOLUNTARY WORK IN ITALY

The information you will find in this short description are concerning the voluntary work activities and projects that *AFSAI* offers you.

In many communities and projects there is a strong Catholic influence, this does not mean you have to take part in the religious activities, but you have to respect the opinion and the idea of others.

Basic information

At last it is very important to remember that *this year is not a year of vacation*, but a year of voluntary service, that often requires a hard physical labor and a great deal of patience.

We also would like to underline that you will be a support to the already pre-existing staff.

Most of the placements are in the field of *social work*, that can be roughly divided in the following areas:

The different areas

a) Work with children:

All of these projects offer you the opportunity to learn about educational and pedagogical methods and how to handle with children.

You are requested to live together with the children and to help in the house hold chores. It will be very good if you can paint or draw, if you can sing, play any instrument and if you can do any handicraft's work.

Children

b) Work with disabled people: people with physical and learning disabilities, blind people.

The work is based, above all, on physical assistance. You are also required to accompany the disabled to the doctor, to the movies, etc. In addition you can work in day-care centers organizing cultural activities and taking part in the rehabilitation. You will support the social operators in their work and you will be asked to be very creative and independent.

Disabled

To do this kind of work you must be prepared for an hard physical work and you should have lots of patience and a big willingness to handle with disabled people.

c) Work with elderly people: sometimes at their own houses or in appropriate centers.

The work you will do is to give them company, to speak and play with them, and also to help with the physical assistance. You should speak some Italian before you start to work, in order to be able to be independent and to communicate from the very beginning with the people.

Elderly people

d) Work with young people: in appropriate communities.

Your main task is to "live together" with marginalized or abused youngsters, that never experienced a normal family life; this means you will help the youngsters with their homework, in the house chores and going out with them (e.g. to the doctor, downtown, etc.).

It would be better if you have any particular quality as to do handicraft, or to have drama experience.

It is important that you know some Italian before you start to work.

Young people

e) Work with former drug addicts: mostly in day-care centers.

Your main task is to share the daily life with former drug addicts, working together and taking part in the chores.

Former drug addicts

At this moment we do not have any projects, which deals with ecological and environmental activities and peace and third world awareness activities and projects. As you can read in the enclosure "Voluntary Work: Placements in Italy" most of the placements are in the area of Social Work. This means that it is possible to find different projects to work with, but this opportunity is strictly connected to the number of families willing to host.

Opportunities to work with ecological and third world awareness projects

a) *Ecological and environmental activities and projects*

Their aims are mainly to inform and to make aware people about the ecological issues like pollution, nuclear plants' danger, waste recycling, etc.

The volunteer will help with the usual office work such as to publish brochures, information materials, to prepare public actions, to give information about the organization, to help with the mailing, photocopying, etc.

It would be really a must to speak Italian well before starting with such an activity, otherwise the volunteer will be more devoted to less interesting work (like copying) than to the more interesting part of it.

Speak Italian before

The most important Italian ecological and environmental protection organizations are: *World Wildlife Fund, Lega per l'Ambiente, Italia Nostra, Federazione dei Verdi.*

a) *Peace and third world awareness activities and projects*

Like for the previously described activities and projects, the work to be carried out is more the "so-called" office one, dealing with peace issues and third world aids and awareness projects.

What such organizations and groups usually do is to publish information bulletins and materials, to organize public events or meetings in order to make the people aware of the problems they are dealing with.

The most important Italian organizations working on these issues are: *Amnesty International, Lega Obiettori di Coscienza, Associazione per la Pace, Lega per i Diritti dei Popoli* and many other different groups and associations working in the field of development education and solidarity with third world countries.

Background and former experience

It would be helpful for the volunteer to have a good background on such an issues and some former direct experience in the field.

How to handle possible problems

Should misunderstandings or tensions arise, try to clear them at once by talking openly about them, be ready to make fun of your own mistakes, to say that you are sorry, and to forgive a thoughtless action of others easily.

Talking openly

If serious problems arise you should not keep them for yourself, hoping that they will automatically disappear. The *AFSAI* volunteers in your local chapter and the national *AFSAI* office are there to help you out of situations that may seem very dark to you, only because you see them from a very special angle and you are unable to evaluate all the sides of the questions. You should never be embarrassed to talk or to write about things that disappoint you; you should never think that you must bear any situation, out of the gratitude that you owe to your Italian family and/or community.

Never be embarrassed to talk or to write about things that disappoint you

Please be very frank when you speak with *AFSAI* volunteers:

Moving into another placement

their experience may help you in solving the problems you might face. If we find out that there is something basically wrong in your relationship with either your family or your community, we will move you into another placement: this is a very normal policy, that *AFSAI* has followed for years. If it is your case, you should not feel that you have failed your experience; many other volunteers have gone through these changes before you and have happily finished their voluntary period abroad .

Below you find a schematic description of *AFSAI* 's voluntary work. Please do not consider the names of communities indicated, they are just an example.

POCKET MONEY

ICYE volunteers

The pocket money will be paid, in many cases, by your host family or by the host community every month. It will be around the same amount, which the other children in the family or the other members in the community receive. In case either the family or the community can afford to pay it, you will receive the pocket money directly from *AFSAI*

*Who will be
in charge of
it*

In this case you will receive an allowance of 66 Euro per month. The money will be mailed directly to you *every three months with a cheque or cash*.

*Getting it
from AFSAI*

The first pocket money will be sent as soon as you arrive at your hosting project.

EVS volunteers

EVS volunteers will receive pocket money according to the indication table given by the Commission. In Italy the foreseen monthly amount is 115 Euro.

*How much is
it worth*

The amount will be paid on the base of a three months trance according the entrance of the European grants for project. If the EVS European grant is not arrived to *AFSAI* , we will advance a least a part of the amount you have to receive, and when the grant will be arrived we will pass you the rest.

We know that the amount of money isn't so much, but should be enough to allow you to pay for some basic things. So, as Italy is considered an expensive country, we suggest you to bring with you some extra money to cover personal expenses as for example clothing or travelling.

To give you an idea of what things cost in Italy, here are some prices:

- stamp for letter:
 - within Italy and EU countries Euro 0.62 / 0.62
 - within the rest of Europe Euro 0.82 / 1.20
 - other continents Euro 1.20
- bus ticket (urban) Euro 1,00
- cup of coffee or cappuccino Euro 0.90/1.20
- newspaper Euro 1.00
- movies Euro 6.50/7.50
- 20 cigarettes Marlboro Euro. 4.20
- 1 pizza and 1 beer Euro 15.00
- disco Euro 15.50/21.00

All volunteers who need to use buses to reach their work placements, will be reimbursed of their transportation expenses, from their family/community or by *AFSAI* National Office.

*Transportation
reimbursement*

In the latter case only after the receipts have been submitted to *AFSAI* National Office, reimbursement will be sent via cheque.

All volunteers who need to use buses or other kind of transportation for other reasons will have to take care of these expenses by themselves.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE STAY

AFSAI expects volunteers to arrive in Italy around the mid of September and February/ March for 2 up to 12 months projects. The exact date will be communicated to you following.

*Beginning of
the
voluntary
period
abroad*

Like every committee in ICYE, *AFSAI* offers different activities and conferences throughout the year. Some of them are compulsory: *Introduction camp, mid-stay* and *end of stay conferences*, others are optional.

*Compulsory
and optional
activities*

On Arrival Training

As soon as you arrive in Italy, you will be taken with the other volunteers to the place designated for your Introduction Camp, which will last around 3/4 days. The purpose of this Camp is manifold, but mostly it aims at making you aware of the experience you will live and at giving you the tools to make it successful.

The Introduction Camp is above all:

- *an introduction to the Italian way of life.*
Nobody wants to steal away from you the pleasure of discovering things by yourself, but there are facts that it is important to know when you enter this country, to avoid useless embarrassment and bad feelings;
- *an introduction to the Italian affairs and culture.*
Again, we don't want to brain-wash you, but you will find out that there are some people and events that no one will ever explain to you in Italy, because they are so well known by all Italians, that people just take it for granted that everyone else knows about them too. So it is better to have some notions about them;
- *a group experience.*
Your stay abroad will be enriched by your getting to know other people from different part of the world, who are in your same learning situation. This will be perhaps the first time that you are confronted with so many nationalities and you should try to take advantage of this opportunity;

Mid Stay Conference (for EVS volunteers this is arranged by the Italian National Agency for "Youth")

The Mid Stay Conference lasts 1/2 days and this will be the first meeting where you can evaluate the first months of your stay in Italy together with other volunteers and *AFSAI* volunteers or Only with *AFSAI* staff, in your hosting project.

Evaluation

It is important that you participate to this meeting because during it you can share experiences, impressions with the other volunteers and speak with them about the difficulties you have had and how you overcame them. Through this exchange of impressions you will get more input and strength to use during the second part of your year in Italy.

*How to
overcome
difficulties*

Beside the evaluation of the first part of the voluntary period abroad, you will have a cultural program dealing with a theme of common interest related to the Italian political, social or cultural life.

*Intercultura
I exchange*

The mid-stay conference is an intercultural exchange time both for all volunteers and for the Italian youngsters living in the area.

Please, if you are in any trouble do not wait until the Mid Stay Camp to talk about it! Feel free to call AFSAI at any time either to have a chat or to try to sort your problems out.

End of Stay Conference

This is a meeting where all volunteers meet together. It lasts 1/2 days and is usually held right before the departure for your home country, it generally takes place in the hosting project.

*Before
departing
for home*

This Conference is a moment where you evaluate and reflect about your experience year in Italy and start to think about your second voluntary period abroad at home.

*Your second
voluntary
period
abroad at
home*

Other Activities

Additional meetings take place at local or regional level. This means that AFSAI responsible will be visiting you on your project.

The purpose of these meetings is to have a closer contact with the volunteers and have a chat with him/her after a few months after her/his arrival to Italy.

VISA AND REGISTRATIONS

In the following paragraphs you find the general information on visa and registration. We please ask you to read very carefully the following data, even if you will receive more detailed information.

Part A ALL COUNTRIES BUT EU ONES AND SWITZERLAND

NON EVS VOLUNTEERS

The Icy volunteers who do not participate to an EVS project must apply for a *ONE YEAR / SIX MONTHS STUDY REASON VISA*. They must use their *hosting project address* to fill in the required documents at the Italian Embassy/Consulate.

*Non EVS
volunteers*

The volunteers must apply at the Italian Embassy/Consulate for their *ONE YEAR / SIX MONTHS STUDY REASON VISA* bringing the following documents:

*Compulsory
documents*

- 1) passport valid up to all the next year at least;
- 2) signed and completed application (available in any Italian Embassy/Consulate) for a *ONE YEAR - SIX MONTHS STUDY REASON VISA* (the Italian translation is *VISTO ANNUALE - SEMESTRALE PER MOTIVI DI STUDIO*);
- 3) two photographs passport-size signed on the back;
- 4) a letter from the volunteers'(if under age) parents directed "To Whom It May Concern" giving the permission to travel and to stay in Italy for one year under the auspices of *AFSAI*, notarized and also stamped by a Country Clerk;
- 5) the letter *A CHI DI COMPETENZA* (it will be forwarded by your Sending Organization) filled by the *AFSAI* with volunteer's name;
- 6) the letter *ALL'ATTENZIONE DEGLI UFFICI CONSOLARI ITALIANI-SEZIONE VISTI* (it will be forwarded by your Sending Organization) filled by *AFSAI* with volunteer's name.

Important: the *ONE YEAR - SIX MONTHS STUDY REASON VISA* must NOT be restricted to one special town in Italy.

EVS VOLUNTEERS

The Visa Office of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has communicated to all Italian Diplomatique Repetitive, Consulates and Embassies the Agreement signed by the Italian Ministry of Welfare and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a message dated 29th of August 2001, Protocol number 306/25282.

The Agreement indicates that all Non-EU Member States Residents participants to an EVS project in Italy will be able to apply for a Visa for MISSION/VOLUNTARY SERVICE.

The volunteers must apply at the Italian Embassy/Consulate for their *ONE YEAR (or less months) VISA FOR MISSION/VOLUNTARY SERVICE* bringing the following documents :

Compulsory Documents

- 1) passport valid up to all August of the next year at least;
- 2) signed and completed application (available in any Italian Embassy/Consulate) for a *ONE YEAR (or less months) MISSION/VOLUNTARY VISA* (the Italian translation is *VISTO ANNUALE - SEMESTRALE PER MISSIONE/VOLONTARIATO*);
- 3) two photographs passport-size signed on the back;
- 4) a letter from the volunteers'(if under age) parents directed "To Whom It May Concern" giving the permission to travel and to stay in Italy for one year under the auspices of *AFSAI* , notarized and also stamped by a Country Clerk;
- 5) the letter *A CHI DI COMPETENZA* (it will be forwarded by your Sending Organization) filled by the *AFSAI* with volunteer's name;
- 6) the letter *ALL'ATTENZIONE DEGLI UFFICI CONSOLARI ITALIANI-SEZIONE VISTI* (it will be forwarded by your Sending Organization) filled by *AFSAI* with volunteer's name.

Important: the *VISA FOR MISSION/VOLUNTARY SERVICE* must NOT be restricted to one special town in Italy.

Part B

ALL NON EU COUNTRIES AND SWITZERLAND

The volunteers from the above mentioned Countries have to bring to Italy a personal identification document (passport or ID) valid at least for the entire stay in Italy.

RESIDENCE PERMIT

As soon as you arrive at your hosting project you will have to ask and a get a Residence Permit. To apply for the residence permit, you need:

Residence permit

- 4 recent color passport size photographs (please bring them from your country);
- to pay around 11.00 Euro as police stamps duty (only for non EU Countries)

Within 8 working days from your arrival to your final destination (family or community) it is **COMPULSORY** to go (it would be helpful and quicker to be accompanied by a member of your hosting family/community) to the nearest police headquarters (in Italian called *Questura*) in order to renew your residence permit. You have to submit the letter *A CHI DI COMPETENZA* (that *AFSAI* will give you) and the insurance letter (you will receive from your sending organization/committee). The residence permit will last up to the end of your voluntary period in Italy ; in case it may not, it will be your duty to get the renewal whenever necessary.

A chi di competenza, insurance policy form

In case you do not/can not renew your residence permit, please contact *AFSAI* !

A presto, in Italia