



**afesai**  
LA CURIOSITA' DIVENTA ESPERIENZA

# **NATIONAL PROFILE**

## **Program Year 2015-2016**

**BASIC INFORMATION TO PREPARE YOURSELF  
TO THE VOLUNTARY SERVICE IN  
ITALY**

# LIST OF SUBJECTS

<b>FOREWORD</b>	<i>page. 1</i>
<hr/>	
<b>Introducing Italy</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🔗 GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT ITALY <i>page. 2</i></li> <li>🔗 PRINCIPAL HISTORICAL EVENTS <i>page. 5</i></li> </ul>	
<hr/>	
<b>Introducing AFSAI</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🔗 WHAT IS AFSAI <i>page. 7</i></li> <li>🔗 THE NATIONAL COORDINATION OFFICE STAFF <i>page. 8</i></li> </ul>	
<hr/>	
<b>Preparing your voluntary period abroad</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🔗 HOW PREPARE YOURSELF TO THE VOLUNTARY SERVICE IN ITALY <i>page. 9</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language <i>page. 9</i></li> <li>• Do you really know your country? <i>page. 9</i></li> <li>• Your attitude <i>page. 10</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>🔗 WHAT WE ARE EXPECTING FROM YOU <i>page. 11</i></li> </ul>	
<hr/>	
<b>A host placement survey</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🔗 AFSAI PLACEMENTS <i>page. 13</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COMMUNITIES AND PLACEMENTS: THE VOLUNTARY PROGRAMME <i>page. 14</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities and social work placements <i>page. 14</i></li> <li>• The voluntary program <i>page. 16</i></li> <li>• Description of voluntary work in Italy <i>page. 18</i></li> <li>• How to handle possible problems <i>page. 19</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>🔗 SOME FINANCIAL ISSUES <i>page. 20</i></li> </ul>	

## FOREWORD

*Dear friends and future volunteers,*

our organization is AFSAI which is the acronym of *Associazione per la Formazione, gli Scambi e le Attività Interculturali* (Italian Association for Education, Exchanges and Intercultural Activities) and we are the Italian national committee of the *International Cultural Youth Exchange Federation* (ICYE) which we joined in 1978.

This National Profile, though not being a complete survey on Italian history and present situation, will provide you some general information and some practical indications about Italian history and social life as well as it will offer a short presentation of AFSAI's structure and sectors of work and of its National Coordination Office staff in Rome.

Previous volunteers' experiences showed how important it is to get clear ideas on what you may expect from the period you will spend in Italy. So, we hope this document may help you to develop the right approach for the exchange period in our country.

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

We wish you a good reading.

The warmest welcome from all AFSAI volunteers and staff!

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## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT ITALY

Italy is a peninsula whose coasts are bathed 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.

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

*Geographical  
and socio-  
political  
hints*



**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/](http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/the_euro/) ).

**Paper currency:** There are 7 euro banknotes. 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 State.

**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, 110 provinces and 8.086 towns. 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).

**Neighbours:** France to the West, Switzerland to the North-West, Austria to the North-East, Slovenia 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  $-10^{\circ}\text{C}$ .; max. temp. in summer about  $+30^{\circ}\text{C}$ .;



**TRENTO**



**BOLZANO**

*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  $-5^{\circ}\text{C}$ .; max. temp. in summer around  $+35^{\circ}\text{C}$ .;



**MILANO**



**TORINO**

*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  $-5^{\circ}\text{C}$ .; max. temp. in summer around  $+30^{\circ}\text{C}$ .;



**VENEZIA**



**TRIESTE**

*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  $-3^{\circ}\text{C}$ .; max. temp. in summer  $+30^{\circ}\text{C}$ .;



PERUGIA



BENEVENTO

*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  $+5^{\circ}\text{C}$ .; max. temp. in summer  $+35^{\circ}\text{C}$ .;



ROMA



FIRENZE

*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  $+8^{\circ}\text{C}$ .; max. temp. in summer  $+37^{\circ}\text{C}$ .



REGGIO CALABRIA



BRINDISI

## PRINCIPAL HISTORICAL EVENTS

*Historical  
hints*

Italian history is very complex dating back to 2.500 years ago and, so forth, it could be not told in few lines. However, you will find described here some principal events of Italian recent history starting from 1860 when, for the first time, Italy was known as unified State.

1860	Declaration of unification of Italy under the Savoia' s monarchy (northern pattern of administration, capital Turin).
1870	The Capture of Rome: the final event of the long process of Italian unification allowed to join also the territory of the Pontifical State to the Italian peninsula under King Victor Emmanuel II of the House of Savoy.
1915-1918	First World War.
1922-1943	Fascism.
1940-1945	Second World War.
1946	Fall of the monarchy and foundation of the Italian Republic.
1947-1967	Economic boom
1967-1969	Beginning of social and economic 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: Brigade 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	Bomb in Bologna railway station by fascist groups
1980-1983	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.  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.
1983-1987	Under the Craxi Government, Italy reached a stable economical situation succeeding in entering the Club of the Seven More Industrialized Countries. Notwithstanding this, social and political disorders were still present as a signal of social malaise: students and workers demonstrations, feeble attempts to rebuild the terrorist groups, due to the fact that the economical growth wasn't totally a fair one: mainly the upper class benefited by it.
1987-1990	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.  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).
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 - <math>\frac{3}{4}</math> by majority vote in constituencies and <math>\frac{1}{4}</math> 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 and new elections took place on April 21st, 1996. Romano Prodi became Prime Minister of a new Government composed by a leftist coalition.
1997-1998	Thanks to the efforts made by the Italian population and Prodi Government in balancing Italian economical accounts, Italy could 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 was Carlo Azeglio Ciampi
2000	Italy changed two different Governments 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	From June 2001 to April 2005, Silvio Berlusconi has been Premier.
2006	On April 2006 Romano Prodi was the new premier and Mr. Napolitano was the new President of the Italian Republic.
2006-2008	After a crisis inside the majority Prodi's Government follow down. In the election of 2008 the right coalition won so since April Silvio Berlusconi was again the new premier.
2009	Although a series of personal scandals connected to his private sphere and several tentative to reform the juridical Italian system, Silvio Berlusconi was confirmed as Prime Minister. Italy started to be influenced by the economic crisis.
2010	Italy is overcome by national economic crisis. Corruption of the political system, a huge tension between social parts create ultraconservative policy and social unrest. Berlusconi was still the Prime Minister but his reliability was crushing down day by day.
2011	The political situation became more and more unbearable, the social unrest reached high levels demonstrated through strong strikes and also the EU asked to Italy to adopt much more reliable political solutions for the crisis. After EU pressures about Italian political and economical crisis Berlusconi was constrained to resign. Since the middle of November 2011 Italy had a technical Government whose Prime Minister was Mario Monti.
2012	As a consequence of the economic crisis, the worst unemployment level after the second world war was registered. En December 2012, once the Law of Stability has been approved, Monti resigned as Prime Minister. The Government went on working and it will continue until the new Government will be composed in 2013.
2013	New political elections have been held in February. The elections showed a division of the votes among 3 principal groups: the center-left coalition lead by the Democratic Party (PD); the center-right coalition lead by "Popolo della Libertà" Party and the a Movimento "5 stelle" (5 stars Movement). After a couple of months of debates and discussions among the three groups, the center-left coalition and the center right coalition composed a "big coalition" Government, guided by the Prime Minister Enrico Letta, from PD party.

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 everyday life conversations. These information are also divulgated by the Italian Cultural Institutes (Istituti di Cultura Italiana) which are usually present in each foreign State.

*Italian  
Cultures  
Institutes*

## WHAT IS AFSAI

AFSAI is the acronym of *Associazione per la Formazione, gli Scambi e le Attività Interculturali* and it is the Italian National Committee of ICYE.

Nowadays the organization is composed by various local focal points present in different regions of Italy. They are run by AFSAI former volunteers who support the National Coordination Office implementing our projects and promoting and divulgating our activities.

*AFSAI  
Foundation*

On national level *AFSAI* is managed by the Board of Directors (in Italian *Consiglio di Amministrazione*, often abbreviated in *CdA*) composed by members who are elected for a three years term. Among them, the association's chairperson is chosen. The *CdA* meets at least five times per year, in order to discuss and to decide on financial matters and about different questions related to AFSAI programs.

*Board of  
Directors*

The present Board of Managers is composed of the following people:

President:	Mr. Massimiliano Viatore	(Triggiano, BA)
Treasurer:	Mr. Roberto Vinciguerra	(Rome, RM)
Member:	Mr. Valerio Pellirossi	(Anzio, RM)
Member:	Ms. Chiara Lenza	(Rome, RM)

The members of the *CdA* are elected by *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 volunteers can attend the General Assembly.

*General  
Assembly*

The National Coordination Office (in Italian *Ufficio di Coordinamento Nazionale*, often abbreviated in *UdCN*) is settled in Rome. The *UdCN* which works in close relation with the local focal points, cares of AFSAI both national and international relations.

The *UdCN* is in general in charge of the administrative work of *AFSAI*: It receives applications forms of incoming volunteers and coordinates the placements. It organizes the advertising campaigns, pre-departure training courses for outgoing volunteers and on arrival training for the hosted ones.

*National  
Coordinator  
Office*

Moreover, besides the annual exchange program at international level, AFSAI organizes, through its *UdCN*, other intercultural initiatives, such as school exchange year program, short-term exchanges for groups of young people within Europe, training courses for youth workers in the field of intercultural youth exchanges and, since 1996, it is fully involved in EVS (European Voluntary Service) Program.

Herein you can find all details to reach AFSAI office and to get in contact with its staff:

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

**AFSAI**  
VIALE DEI COLLI PORTUENSI, 345 - B2  
00151 ROMA

Telephone: (+39/6) 537.03.32  
Telefax: (+39/6) 92913305

E-mail: [steps@afsai.it](mailto:steps@afsai.it)  
Web page: [www.afsai.it](http://www.afsai.it)

**THE NATIONAL COORDINATION OFFICE STAFF**

**MASSIMILIANO VIATORE**



**AFSAI DIRECTOR**

Born in Triggiano (BA) in 1967.  
 He has been working in the local point of his city, Bari, for two years.  
 He started to work in the UdCN in September 1993.  
 He is currently President of the association of Youth Service.  
 From 2007 till 2012 he was President of REL (Rete Europa Lazio).  
 From 2005 till 2011 President of AVSO (Association of Voluntary Service Organization) based in Bruxelles.

**AURORA CARUSO**



*Sending and Hosting Volunteering Programme Manager*

Born in Rome, Aurora has a master degree in communication sciences. She worked in Ireland for an organization of cultural events for 2 years. In 2008, after an internship in the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, in Greece, and a master course in Europroject Management and Public Relations she started to work in AFSAI.

**VALENTINA DE LEONARDIS**



*Sending and Hosting Volunteering Programme Manager*

Born in Bari in 1983, Valentina got a degree in Oriental Languages and Civilizations. The HUGE passion for the Asian languages and cultures has always been with her during her study tours in China and her voluntary services in India, Malaysia, Thailand and Cambodia. She joined in AFSAI ngo in 2012 and, after an internship, she became the Volunteer Program Manager.

**MARIA MINEO**



**SCHOOL PROGRAMME - *Sending/Hosting Programme Manager***

Born in Rome in 1975. More than 10 years experience in educational programs for young students in several international associations to promote different cultures and learn languages abroad.

## HOW PREPARE YOURSELF TO THE VOLUNTARY SERVICE IN ITALY

The period before your departure is very important in order to prepare yourself to your new experience abroad. Herein we give you some hints which we suggest you to reflect on.

*Preparation*

### Language

Before leaving, it is extremely recommendable to learn few basic expressions of the Italian language which could be very useful to communicate with other people, at least to present yourself (name, age, provenience), to ask information and/or express your needs.

We recommend you to look for (in the library of your school or in a bookshop) some books in order to start approaching the new language. Thanks to a previous preparation before your departure, you will be able to improve greatly your expressive capability in Italian language 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 several weeks, you will naturally and obviously miss most of the conversations around you: this happens to each volunteer and therefore you should not feel depressed. 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, during which you will try to use all the expressions you have learnt. There is nothing you can loose, you can only gain in this game! Even If you make a mistake, everybody will laugh and you will have another funny story to be used in your future conversations in the coming period.

*Not a  
dreadful  
task, but a  
pleasant  
game*

Soon, talking must become something natural and pleasant, as it is for the Italians!

### Do You Really Know Your Country?

Another important element to be considered before leaving is to deepen the knowledge of your culture and of social and political aspects of your own country. The world has become so small that many questions will be asked to you about your land and in several conversations you will have the chance to describe it to other people.

*Social,  
cultural and  
political  
aspects of  
your country*

Maybe you might ask the help of a qualified person in your village/city or of a Professor at your University or, of course, just read some specialized books about your country. It would be recommended not focusing only on historical, economical or social elements but considering specific habits and beliefs which characterize your country and your own culture. Moreover, analyzing them you will have the opportunity to understand their origins, causes and foundations and to have the chance to better explain them to foreign people.

So, before you leave, you should submit your beliefs to an accurate scrutiny. You will see that the more you understand the reasons why you have some habits, beliefs, customs, the easier it will be for you to make people understand them!

*Submit your  
beliefs to an  
accurate  
scrutiny*

## Your attitude

Even more important than being well informed about your country is the attitude you will assume in your daily contacts with people in the host country. It is important to reflect that during your stay you should not act as an Ambassador of your Nation: you must act as yourself.

It could happen 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.

Moreover, if you find out that people are happier when you turn to them as a person, you will also find out that they get angry or nervous if you are spending your time only spreading around the 'glory' of your nation. In this case, they will not understand or learn anything about you and your country, and they might get even a negative opinion which is of course the opposite intention you had.

*Your  
attitude*

*You must act  
as yourself*

*You are not  
just an  
Ambassador  
of your  
country*

## 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 luckier than all of them. You will be given the opportunity to get an intimate understanding of the life in our country and 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 it will be natural for you to ask questions in order to better understand a different way of living. This is not, however, an easy task. It will require some sacrifice from you part and a strong will to grasp the inner significance of our actions and of those of the others.

Remember, therefore, that it is essential that you get rid of preconceived opinions in order to come here 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 contributed to develop in you a certain social and mental habits that, though fully reasonable and acceptable for you, are not an equal pattern 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 specific cultural and social environment and can be worthless in another country. With this attitude, you will be able to accept what is new, without judging it. And along the same line of thought, you will be able to understand opinions different from yours, and even feeling 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 the others. And if you do not understand why people do things in a different manner than you, never be afraid to ask and find it out. We suggest you to adopt this attitude not only when you arrive, but along your entire experience in Italy. If knowing something, *having an opinion on something*, means to penetrate to the core of the things, 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 linked to your capacity of learning: your capacity of giving. What other people give to you (friendliness, respect, understanding and care) is often 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 could be more difficult to obtain.

*Your capacity of giving*

Of course at the beginning, and also 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 could 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, most of all when you are just starting to know each other. What is really 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 not doing it might worsen your

*Discuss your misunderstandings openly and frankly*

relationship with the other person.

Another thing to keep in mind is that not everybody is going to be sensitive with 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 challenges, difficulties or problems you might meet during your stay and some of the answers we suggest for them. There are, of course, several other ways of facing these problems if they arise, so you should try to work out, with our help or with the help of your tutor the ones more suitable for your personality. We want to be certain just of one thing: do not overestimate nor underestimate them.

*Do not  
overestimat  
e nor  
underestima  
te*

## AFSAI PLACEMENTS

In Italy volunteers could be placed both in Northern, Central 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 different aspects of the Italian lifestyle. In fact, a lot of volunteers are placed in villages, so you should not expect to spend your volunteer period 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.*

**18 to 30  
years old  
volunteers**

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.

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 volunteering period 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 your work and the Italian language course very seriously! Therefore we ask to volunteers to remain in the same community for the whole period.

**Stay in the  
same  
placement  
for the  
whole year**

## COMMUNITIES AND PLACEMENTS: THE VOLUNTARY PROGRAMME

### Communities and social work placements

Living and working in a community means to be deeply involved in the work carried out and it implies a great deal of willingness to learn something concrete and useful for your future. Therefore we expect volunteers to be very independent, open-minded and ready to learn from the new situation they 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 a volunteer is because they need your active support to their work and activities.

*Your active  
and unbroken  
contribution*

Jobs are very different: looking after children/elderly people/people with physical and learning disabilities, living and working together with drug addicted etc. For more detailed information see. *The voluntary program's* section (a few pages ahead), about the voluntary work placements. This section 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*

Since the community's members have been living together for a while, it may be a bit difficult to enter to 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, you have to try 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 quick. 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 friendly manner.

### The voluntary Program

The decision to experience a period of voluntary work in a foreign country, requires an open-mindedness that allows to adapt also to situations that could not be foreseen before your arrival in Italy. We can say 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 in need create the basis to get as much as possible out of the period you will live in a new and different context.

The description that follows tries to show you what it means to have the opportunity to do social and voluntary work in Italy in the framework of our voluntary projects.

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

Before explaining you with more details the voluntary program, we would like to underline the following aspects:

***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 to 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. Projects expect compromised volunteers who act with sense of responsibility and who are tolerant and flexible;
- The work you will do within the projects is on a **voluntary** base.  
Do not expect to receive money for the work you do. Usually the project, through *AFSAI*, will give you the pocket-money to cover your own expenses.
- Do **not** expect to receive a **work permit**.

***Voluntary base***

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 to 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 period is not a period of vacation*, but a period 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, never you will be considered as a substitution of the existing equip.

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 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.

- b) **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*

- c) **Work with children and 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*

At this moment most of our placements are in the area of social work. Indeed we do not have any project which deals with ecological and environmental activities and peace and third world awareness activities as we describe as follows:

*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 people aware about some 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 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.

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

*Background and former experience*

### **How to handle possible problems**

If serious problems arise you should not keep them for yourself, hoping that they will automatically disappear. *AFSAI* is at disposal to help you facing that situations. 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 by yourself without sharing it with your Italian family and/or community, with your tutor and/or with *AFSAI* Hosting Coordinator.

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

Please be very frank when you speak with *AFSAI*. If we find out that there is something wrong in your relationship with either your family or your community, we will try to recover it, but if it's something unrecoverable 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.

*Talking openly*

## SOME FINANCIAL ISSUES

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

- |                               |                  |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| • bus ticket (urban)          | Euro 1,30/1,50   |
| • cup of coffee or cappuccino | Euro 0.90/1.20   |
| • newspaper                   | Euro 1.20        |
| • movies                      | Euro 6.50/7.50   |
| • 20 cigarettes Camel         | Euro 4.60        |
| • 1 pizza and 1 beer          | Euro 15.00/20.00 |
| • 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, only after submitting the corresponding receipts.

*Transportation  
reimbursement*

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

# A presto, in Italia !

