

NATIONAL PROFILE



Joint
Association

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1. WELCOME TO ITALY

1.1 Facts about the place



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

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

Population: around 60.000.000 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

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 part 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 in the West, Switzerland in the North-West, Austria in the North-East, Slovenia in the East.

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

1. WELCOME TO ITALY

1.1 Facts about the place

Considering the climate, Italy can be divided in the following regions:

Alps (Valle d'Aosta, Piemonte, Lombardia, Friuli Venezia-Giulia):

long and cold winters, short summers.

Temperature: Min. in winter around -10°C .; max. in summer $+30^{\circ}\text{C}$.

Po Valley (Piemonte, Lombardia, Veneto):

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.

Temperature: Min. in winter around -5°C .; max. in summer $+35^{\circ}\text{C}$.

Northern Adriatic Coast (Veneto, Emilia-Romagna, Marche, Abruzzo):

the Adriatic sea is not much deep and it 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.

Temperature: Min. in winter -5°C .; max. in summer $+30^{\circ}\text{C}$.

Appenines (Umbria, Lazio, Molise, Basilicata):

these mountains are lower than the Alps and therefore enjoy longer and warmer summers. Snow in winter. Rain, specially on the western side.

Temperature: Min. temp. in winter -3°C .; max. temp. in summer $+30^{\circ}\text{C}$.

Northern Tyrrhenian Coast (Liguria, Toscana, Lazio, Campania):

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.

Temperature: Min. in winter $+5^{\circ}\text{C}$.; max. temp. in summer $+35^{\circ}\text{C}$.

Southern Mediterranean Coasts and Islands

(Puglia, 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.

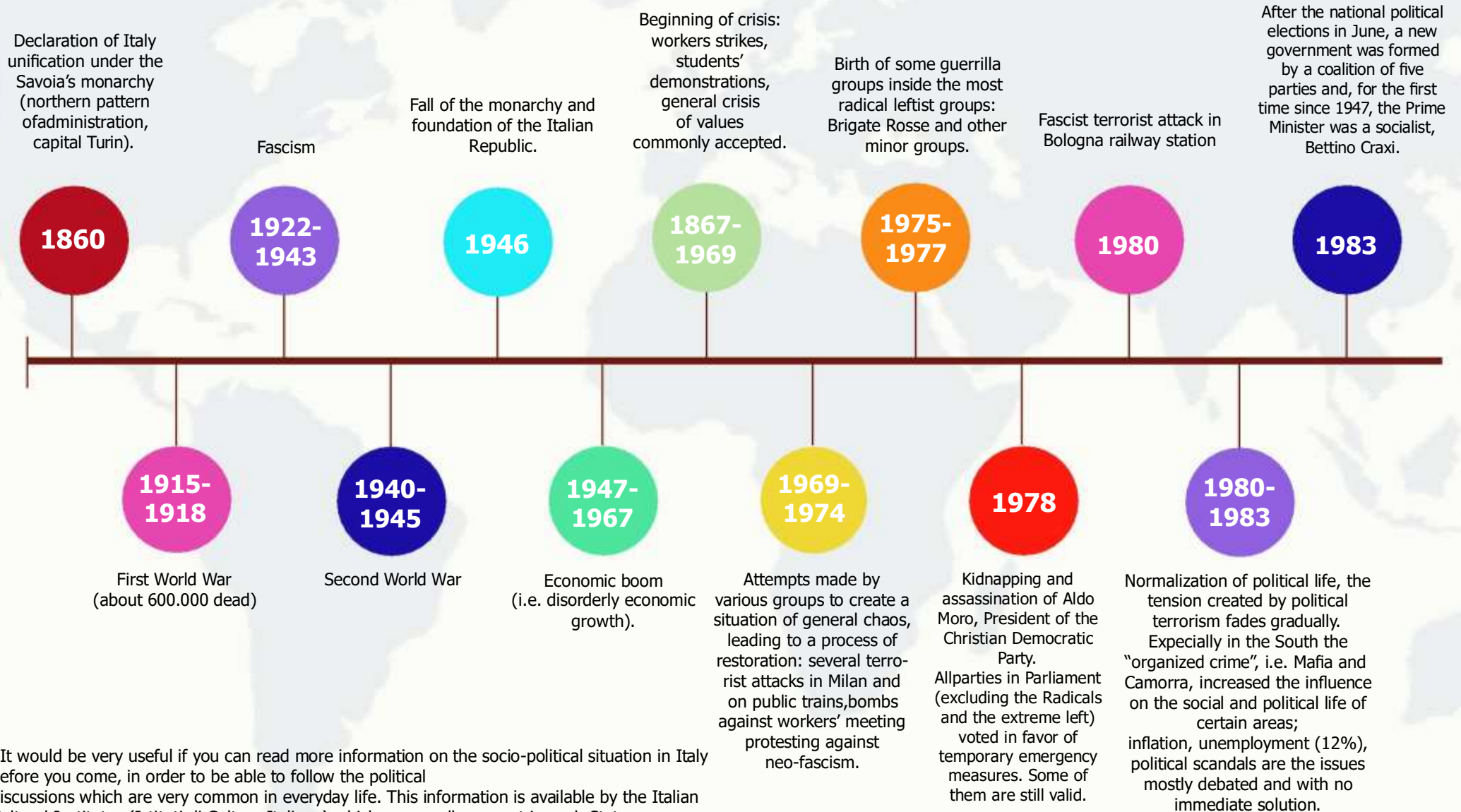
Temperature: Min. in winter $+8^{\circ}\text{C}$.; max. temp. in summer $+37^{\circ}\text{C}$.



1. WELCOME TO ITALY

1.1 Historical facts

Italian history is very complex dating back to 2.500 years ago and, so forth, it could be not told in few lines. However, we will try to concentrate on the recent history starting from 1860 when, for the first time, Italy was known as unified state with approximately the same boundaries it has nowadays.



*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. This information is available by the Italian Cultural Institutes (Istituti di Cultura Italiana) which are usually present in each State.

3. WHAT IS JOINT ASSOCIATION?

3.1 Who we are

Joint Association is a not for profit association based in Milan, Italy, established in 2003, whose mission is to offer international mobility and non-formal education opportunities to young people. Its name had been chosen to mean that the association itself is mean of connection among people, regardless of their background, faith, age or gender. We are specialized in projects related to non-formal education and intercultural learning and addressed to young people between 13 and 30 years old and we tryng to encourage the participation of young people with fewer opportunities.

Joint is a founding partner of RIVE (Italian Network of European Volunteering), an association that gathers different Italian organizations with the purpose of promoting international mobility among youth, in particular through the European Voluntary Service scheme.

In the last few years Joint extended the scope of its activities to include language courses, work camps as well as medium and long-term volunteering opportunities outside Europe, offering now a broad range of opportunities abroad to Italian young people.



4. HOW DO YOU PREPARE YOURSELF

4.1 Language

BUONGIORNO

你好

HALLO

HOLA

CIAO

OLÁ

HELLO

안녕

ΥΕΙΛΑ

नमस्ते

привет

The month preceding your departure from your country and from your family should be dedicated to prepare yourself for your experience. Hereby we include some of the topics on which we believe you should reflect before departure.

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

This will enable you to learn the language faster to communicate with Italians, acquire more self-confidence and autonomy.

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

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: every day 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 lose, you can only gain.

Whether you make a mistake, people will either help you correcting it or won't make a big deal out of it - in both ways communication and mutual understanding remain the aim. Or you might have a funny story to tell later on.

Our suggestion is to talk as much as possible!

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

4. HOW DO YOU PREPARE YOURSELF

4.2 Do you really know your country?

You'll be asked many questions about the social and political structure of your country, **be prepared!**

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 unfortunate to find out too late that most of your beliefs are not based on facts but on the contrary, that they are the outcome of the prevailing opinions of the persons you have been in contact with (your family, your teachers, your friends...). It would be difficult in Italy to make people understand you if you talk through clichés, as they can be understood only in the very place where they were created.

So before you leave, you should submit your beliefs to an accurate control. You see, the more you understand the reasons why you have reached 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.



4. HOW DO YOU PREPARE YOURSELF

4.3 Your attitude



Even more important than being well informed about the exiting situation in your country is the attitude when relating with people. It is necessary that you begin to reflect on this matter starting from now on, since sometimes your natural reaction may not be very appropriate.

Above everything else you should try to 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 it might happen that people will turn to you as a foreigner, but you should try to make them understand, always with the most polite manners, that you are, firstly, a person and that the fact 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.

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 of.

5. 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.

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 Italians.

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 keen to ask questions and to search for the motivations behind a different way of living.

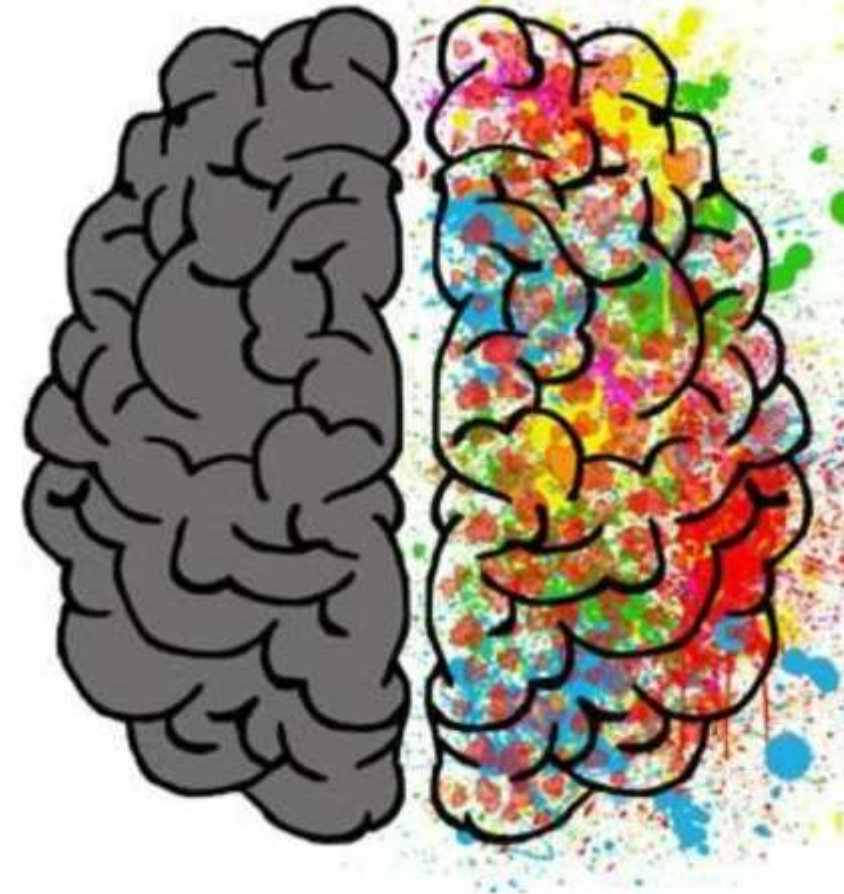
This is not, however, an easy task. Knowledge is never acquired by examining only the surface of things; on the contrary it is a matter of constant care and orientation directed to grasping the inner significance of our actions and of the actions of the others. For this reason come with a **open mind!**

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.

This also implies that even when you face a different way of doing things, you should be ready to try it, rather than imposing your way. 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 go deep into the core of things, and this is a long and difficult task, you should not draw any conclusions before a very long time after your arrival.

But there is something else connected with your ability of learning: your ability 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 reach.



5. WHAT WE ARE EXPECTING FROM YOU

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 still learning to know each other. But what is important when this happens is discussing your misunderstandings openly and frankly (but always with respect for the opinion of the other person) particularly when failure in doing this might worsen your relationship with the involved people.

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 be friendly to 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.

Since the community members have been living together for a while it may be a little difficult to enter an already existing group. In such a case it is up to you to break the ice by asking questions not only about things and habits, but also about more important matters, by suggesting activities to do together in the free time. Whatever the situation of the community may be, it is your job to establish a close relationship with the others living there, sharing the daily life and the problems connected to it: you should 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 responsibility 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 being yourself to act in a true friendly and sincerely manner.

5. WHAT WE ARE EXPECTING FROM YOU

5.1 The volunteering program

The decision to experience a year of voluntary work in a foreign country requires an open-mindedness that allows you 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 their commitment. 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 of 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 it means to have the opportunity to do social and voluntary work in Italy.

Volunteers are placed in the Alternative Living Situations (Communities) that are projects you live in and work within an Association that 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 seriously and that you approach this new experience in an 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 a sense of responsibility and to be 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 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 Joint Association 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. 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.

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



6. DESCRIPTION OF VOLUNTARY WORK IN ITALY

6.1 Volunteer Requirements



- Volunteer must be between 18 and 30 years (for ESC/SVE projects only);
- Willingness and motivation to work continuously on integration in the local Italy culture (project, local activities, cultural activities);
- Willingness and capability of working up to 30-35 hours per week;
- Understanding that the conditions of the work contract between volunteer and project are binding (i.e. working hours, holiday slots, flexibility, tasks);
- Understand that the projects count on the reliability and the presence of the volunteer at work.

6. DESCRIPTION OF VOLUNTARY WORK IN ITALY

6.2 Project Fields

Basic Informations

The information you will find in this short description are ABOUT the voluntary work activities and projects that Joint Association offers.

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.

At last it is very important to remember that this year is not a year of holiday, but a year of voluntary service, that often requires a hard physical labor and great 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:

Work with children and youth:

All these projects offer you the opportunity to learn 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. Painting and drawing skills are much appreciated, as well as singing, playing any instrument or handcrafting.

Ecological and environmental activities and projects

In this field we host projects of two main different types:
Ecologic farms placement and awareness raising placements.

In the firstone, activities are about taking care of animals in educational farms or organic farms, gardening (often organic gardening), green building techniques or renovation, as well as helping with children environment education activities.

In the latter, the 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 publishing brochures, information materials, preparing public actions, giving information about the organization, helping with the mailing, photocopying, etc.

6. DESCRIPTION OF VOLUNTARY WORK IN ITALY

6.3 How to handle possible problems



LET'S TALK!

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.

If serious problems arise you should not keep them for yourself, hoping that they will automatically disappear.

The Joint Association volunteers in your local chapter and the national Joint Association 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.

Please be very frank when you speak with Joint Association volunteers: 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 Joint Association 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 Joint Association's voluntary work.

*Please do not consider the names of communities indicated, they are just an example.

6. DESCRIPTION OF VOLUNTARY WORK IN ITALY

6.4 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 Joint Association.

In this case you will receive an allowance of **65 Euro** per month.

The money will be transferred directly to you every three months via wire transfer or in cash.

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 **165 Euro**.

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 costs in Italy, here are some prices:

-
- bus ticket (urban) Euro 2,00
- cup of coffee or cappuccino Euro 0.90/1.20
- movies Euro 6.50/7.50
- 20 cigarettes Marlboro Euro. 5.50
- 1 pizza and 1 beer Euro 15.00
- Clubs Euro 15.50/21.00

All volunteers using **public transport to reach their work placements** will be reimbursed for these expenses, from their family/community or by Joint Association.

In the latter case only after the receipts have been submitted to Joint Association, reimbursement will be sent via wire transfer.

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.



6. DESCRIPTION OF VOLUNTARY WORK IN ITALY

6.5 Visa Procedure



Regarding the procedure for the permission to stay in Italy, it's important to know that Volunteers that don't have an European Passaport they need a Visa which allows to stay up to 90 days.

As soon as possible we will give you more informations about the permit for long periods.

It's volunteer responsibility to contact the nearest consulate and ask for any specific requirements that they might have. Finally, he/she will has to make sure, though, to varify the specific requirements of his/her local consulate, as they tend to vary.

6. DESCRIPTION OF VOLUNTARY WORK IN ITALY

6.6 Packing List

- Passport;
- All your pre-departure papers;
- Small gifts from your country to show at International Events;
- Personal medication with a doctor's prescription as needed,
- Photos, games, music, information about your home country, family and friends to share during your project;
- Debit card and credit card.



6. DESCRIPTION OF VOLUNTARY WORK IN ITALY

6.7 Arrival and Staying

Joint Association expects volunteers to arrive in Italy around the **1st of September** and **1st March** for respectively **6/12 months** projects.

The exact date will be communicated to later on.

Like every committee in ICYE, Joint Association 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.



8. ACTIVITIES DURING YOUR STAY

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 **5/7 days**.

The purpose of this Camp is manifold, but mostly it aims to make you aware of the experience you will live and to give you the tools to make it successful.

The most important one is giving you a **first approach to the Italian language**.

Classes will be given to you every day by Professional teachers of the Language school that hosts the event.

Many former volunteers have openly admitted that their adjustment depended greatly on how well they could communicate with their new environment.

We will try to give you information on the opportunity to follow Italian language courses in the area where you will live. All the related expenses will be up to you.

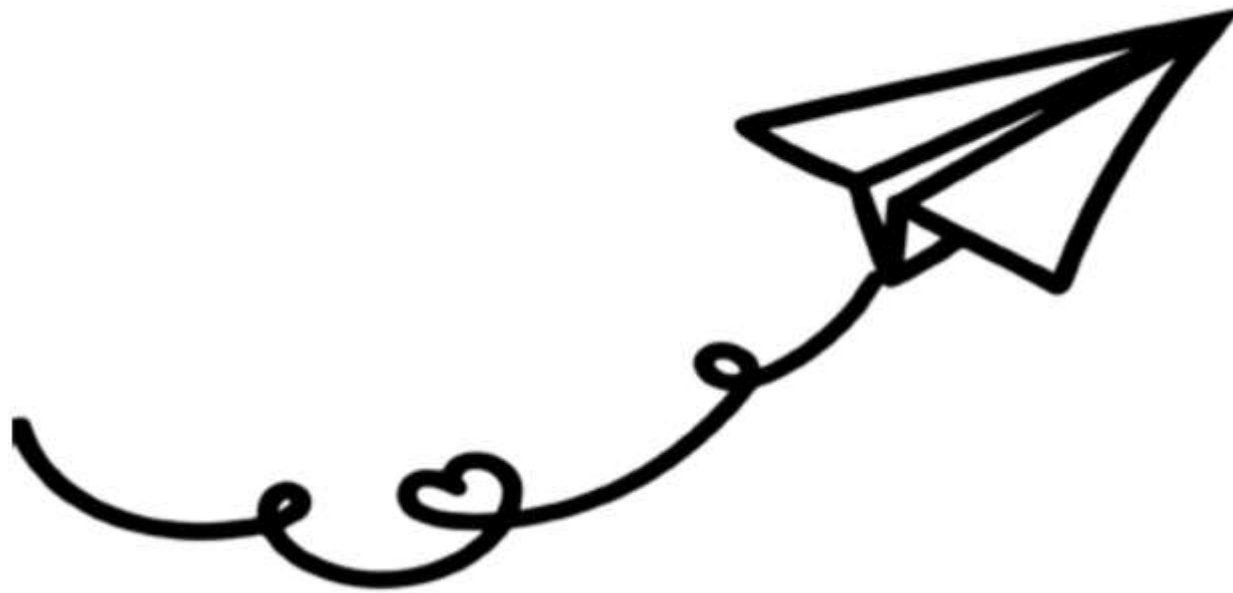
The Introduction Camp apart from the language training is above all:

- **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.**
there will be many opportunities to know events and contexts that you can hardly discover in everyday life during volunteering.
- **A group experience.**
Your stay abroad will be enriched by getting to know other people from different part of the world, who are in your same learning situation.
- **A chance to meet with Joint Association volunteers and people who will help and follow you during your stay in Italy.**
Usually the Orientation and Language Camp is held in Milano, where Joint Association holds its headquarter or in a dedicated place in the countryside.
So this will be an opportunity to meet Joint Association's volunteers and staff that will be there to help you.



See you

in Italy!



Ci vediamo

in Italia!





Joint
Association