

## VOLUNTEERS' REPORTS

### *"STILL ACTIVE" 2004*

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**Clementina Bottalico** (Italian volunteer)

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**Bedheim** (Germany)



On the 5<sup>th</sup> September when we put our luggage into the car my heart was full of anxiety and doubts because of this experience I was going to live in Germany with my husband.

I wasn't worried for my four children that would have been alone because I knew they would have been good and wouldn't have had problems without us. I had a question in my mind: how I will be able to communicate with the other volunteers and the inhabitants of the village without knowing a word of a foreign language.

The outward trip was quite good, Eugenio was a bit nervous for the long travel and I saw the tiredness growing on his face.

Arrived in Bedheim, the coordinator wasn't waiting for us because our arrival hadn't been communicated. Anyway she brought us to a little house where two other volunteers already lived: Frederike, a woman from Vienna, very smart and communicative, and Paulina, a woman from Manchester, typically English.

The little house wasn't very comfortable, in fact it was extremely basic, with holes in the walls and a mouse that visited us once making me really afraid.

I expected to meet other older volunteers, and I was lucky because Frederike and Paulina spoke Italian.

After two days Federica left the castle and only Paulina remained with us for a week. She helped me translating what I said to the German people and I discovered a real English humour in her.

After five or six days I thought to leave Bedheim because I felt useless, even if my work was the kitchen work.

Paulina encouraged me to stay because the next week would have arrived the young volunteers and everything would have changed.

I don't want to say that the inhabitants of the castle weren't good, but I felt a "cold" atmosphere around me and I often asked to me: what am I doing here?

On the contrary Eugenio was enthusiastic and with his knowledge of German he was a great talker. The work I was expected to do was a solitary work and I didn't feel volunteering at all; in spite of this sensation I tried to do the best I could.

When young volunteers from different nationalities arrived the atmosphere changed.

I made friends with them and the fact that I was the only older woman I felt like a mother. They were really good boys and girls who worked in different fields. The majority of them worked in the garden while every day a different couple of them worked in the kitchen to prepare a meal from their country of origin.

It was really interesting to eat their typical meals and share with them the lunch time.

I liked to know more deeply their ideas, their habits, their own culture and share with them the joy of youth.

Luckily two girls knew Italian and I could speak with them with more intensity.

My evaluation of this experience is doubtful even now, because I don't know if I reach the expected aim. Because of this sensation I keep on asking to me:

What did I go to Bedheim for?

Have I done something useful?

According with my personal aim I would have wanted to communicate more with the disabled guys who went to spend the morning at the castle three times a week; but we weren't allowed to have a real affective relationship with them.

Perhaps I would have liked to have a more tight relationship with Karen (the coordinator), who, at the beginning, seemed authoritarian, but later I discovered she was nice and friendly.

Because of all these things, at the time of my departure my eyes were full of tears. When you live negative circumstances during an experience, this negative circumstances are sometimes pushed to the background and the good sensations and memories come out.

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**Maria Franca Brizio**\_(Italian volunteer)

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**Graz** (Austria)





During last summer the association Lunaria gave me the chance to take part to the European Project named “Still Active” that involved 40 over 55 people into Grundtvig Programme.

My knowledge of German language, my past working experience and the long period in which I lived in Germany when I was young, surely helped me entering into the working context. As well, was easy to come in touch with my colleagues - with whom I also spent my spare time with enjoyable cultural and musical activities - and with people I lived with, a young intellectual family from Cuba that enriched me humanly and culturally.

Anyway I suppose that for others volunteers instead of me, would been the same with the same chance of mine.

In Graz I was received by Eurag - European Federation of Older Persons – and with them was a great experience, instructive from any sides. Their welcoming when I arrived was warm and reassuring, they were waiting for me at the main station and we went in the place expected for me, a very comfortable flat below the most important part of the city, the Scholssberg, symbol of Graz.

Immediately the impact on me was really good, thank to this homely atmosphere in the greenery of the hill and the breathtaking view on the city.

The office of the association, within I found kind and helpful persons as Frau Dayé, Gerhard Teissl and Andrea Wolf, made me reliving my working activities’ period – in reality not so challenging – that ended with my retirement.

In the beginning I tidied up the book in the library, I hope my work has been made with the criterion they expected in.

Then, my second activity – translation from German to Italian of some interesting information of the association – took me back of several years to the issues I was concerned with in the past. Also in this case, I wish that the consequential satisfaction has been mutual.

Also my participation to the Italian course managed by Frau Fellner, gave me the opportunity to meet interesting people as some ladies–students, really open to the dialogue, with whom has been created a climate of reciprocal friendliness.

For sure having a knowledge of the hosting country language is an help, anyway I think that is not so important, the communication has to be lived at every level, especially the human ones. The mutual understanding between different people with different cultures, ages and ways of life, coming from this deep not linguistic communication, can avoid misunderstanding between people and in general between cultures and population.

This report come from a really good experience lived in another country of the European union, where according to my point of view I didn’t feel as a foreigner.

P.S. The only little flaw I had to face – wasn’t a big trouble but it clears why I came back in late – was that I couldn’t found the connection with the train to Italy at 11,00 o’clock, because an interruption of the electricity on the railway.

According to the people in charge in Bruck railway station, I should have to wait for another connection that wasn’t direct, then change train in the middle of the night and this sounded really ugly and stressful. So I decided to wait the day after to come back and I was welcomed again in

Graz, as usually really warmly, and I had got over the inconvenience coming back to my comfortable place in Graz one more night.

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**Antonio Capparucci** (Italian volunteer)

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### **Tiszta forras alapitvany Budapest (Hungary)**



I think that we should divide practical from human and social aspects. My report regards my direct participation to a project for homeless based in Budapest.

#### Practical aspect

I already had some experience in Rome before this one. I did voluntary work in a community house for abandoned children, and in a canteen for poor people. I don't know Hungarian and my English is quite basic. This was my starting point. On my arrival I felt immediately in tune with the employees of the association. Only one among the employees spoke a bit of English, and she was essential for the success of my stay there. The other employees spoke only Hungarian, they do secretary work and various sewing work and provision. My task was to co-operate with the responsible of provision ( food retailing sector) to the distribution of food and other basic items. I think that it was an appropriate work considering my background. It was also the best place to have contact with homeless reality. Co-operation has been constructive and friendly since the first time in spite of language difficulties; we performed sign language most of the time: kindness, spontaneity and care made the rest. I was well housed: I stayed in a guesthouse with English breakfast near the centre of Budapest (an interesting and very beautiful city). In the activities day I had lunch with the volunteers of the association. I felt like at home because I had the possibility to have all that I want during the day and people that I met there treated me in a friendly way.

I felt fully satisfied.

#### Social and Human Aspects

First of all I'm very happy to have done this experience: I refer to my will to have an experience like that, in particular in a homeless structure in Hungary where there are 3 millions of people that have a income below the poverty line. We could see it every day. Even if I stayed there for a short time I think that this experience was beneficial for spirit and mind, higher than predicted. I have tried to live this experience in the best way since the first moment. For example one day I have attended Mass (ecumenical rite) for homeless: during the ceremony, a woman has burst out crying as she has been told us her experience, this memory will be stamped in my mind for ever as well as

the silence and the expressions of the other people attending the mass. Do voluntary work in your own country is natural but go and help poorer in other countries is something that everyone should do. I believe, it is necessary to be determined, resolute, conscious of what somebody want to give .Our aid is infinitely little but it could be a stimulus and as Madre Teresa di Calcutta say it is one drop more in the sea of dreams .And someone else after 11 Sept 2001 said: future is in co-operation between people. Personally I made this mine and I wish everybody to do the same. I hope to repeat this voluntary experience.

#### Advice, Suggestion

- I consider that this experience should be lived on an individual basis to stimulate integration spirit
- Two weeks is a too short time if someone hasn't an open mind
- English is essential ,but it's also necessary be interested, motivated , friendly and curious

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### **Heinz Kossdorff (Austrian volunteer)**

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#### **Tallinn (Estonia)**



I was picked up at the Tallinn airport by Ege Kirik from the Estyes Volunteers organisation and brought to the guest house of the pedagogic university. The next day I visited for the first time the Self-help Centre in the Jaan Poska Str. 15. Mr Heino Hankewitz received me and explained the conception of this institution, but also my tasks I was needed for.

Those were:

Assisting in the preparation of the beginning of the autumn session, including two garden festivals on 3 and 4 September 2004 at the premises of the Centre. I also had to mow the lawn (2000 m<sup>2</sup>), setting the tables and chairs, constructing the tent, helping in the kitchen, as well as dismantling and storing.

In the house, I had to arrange new carpets in three floors, as well as to re-furnish the rooms after the summer break. For many events during that time, I automatically helped the female volunteers with setting the tables etc.

Upon my request to become integrated in the ongoing projects, too, Mrs Lea Viirse was my mentor. One of the projects was the care of nazi-victims who had been brought by the nazis from the peninsula Järve on the island Saaremaa to Germany for forced labour.

Another group I worked with were the Ingerian Estonians who had been brought to Finland, from there to Russia and back. On my own expenses, I visited this Island with a rent car at the week end, in particular the bay of Montu where the inhabitants had been brought on German ships.

At the garden festival on 4 September, many of those victims were invited to participate (about 120 persons including accompanying persons) and I had the opportunity to talk with them about their experiences in German, although their knowledge of the German language was quite limited. Both garden festivals were organised in a lovely way with folk song groups coming from Saaremaa, folk dance groups from the Narva area as well as a music groups from the Estonian army who used this event as their rehearsal. The members of the Centre prepared soups, cakes, coffee etc. and all that was sold at a very low price (ca. 4 EK per piece).

Both events lasted for about two hours and were a huge success.

Together with Lea I also visited a nursing home in Märivalla run by the German family „Dussmann“. There, we visited an old lady aged over 80 who told me the story of her life. At the age of 13 she, her sister and her parents were brought to Siberia (the Russians had, in general, deported intellectuals to Siberia – with threadbare accuses.

She had born her daughter in prison and she told us that in the course of the last three years she had written down her story in a diary and passed it on to the Estonian National Museum. She obtained a decoration for that which she also showed to us.

You have to know that the Estonian history is a whole series of foreign domination. Especially, the Russian occupation before 1991 has shaped the country and the whole Baltic.

In daily discussions with various old ladies living in the nursing home who there had all some individual tasks, I learned about unbelievable destinies. Nevertheless, the old ladies expressed power and serenity that was admirable. Some of them aged 86 years go to the nursing homes just to talk with residents there, what nobody else does.

In my leisure time, I made some travels through that small but very beautiful country.

I bought a bike in order to be more mobile and I left it there for future volunteers.

I also worked out new concepts for future Christmas activities and a series of events and handed it over to Mr Hankewitz who would like to put them into practice. The home is financed through two big sponsors and the membership fee of more than 400 people. I think the amount is about 5 Estonian Kronas per month. Everything they consume there they have to pay for, but at very moderate prices.

In addition, they get some contributions from large projects like the one working with nazi victims that is financed from Berlin or the care of grandparents who have to care for their grand-children, because the parents died or divorced.

At present, they have about 40 project groups with each its specific goal, like German or English Language courses, singing, weaving, Nordic walking (upon my proposal, because in the close surrounding there is a famous park - the “Kadriorg”.)

As I did not know that the various project groups started only at the end of September, I could not work in those groups. On the first Tuesday every month, they arrange meetings with all the 40 project leaders, where I gave a presentation about Austria.

I had received material from the Austrian embassy. Beyond culture I gave some information with regard to the situation of older people in Austria and the pensions reform. Finally, I distributed copies of the original recipe for the famous Sacher Torte in Estonian.

Austria is seen by these older people in an extremely positive way, they above all very often mentioned the floridity at the houses and villages.

Summarizing, it was a highly enriching experience. This way, you can get the deepest impression of a country. The Estonians feel the most related with the Finnish people, more than the other two Baltic States. Still today it is very striking that they have strong anger towards their Russian compatriots who stayed there and who did not want to learn Estonian, although this is the only official language.

Older people in Estonia really have very little money as pension income, but they can earn (without legal limitations) additional income. This is frequently (mis-)used by enterprises, because old-age has a low social status.

Ene Veiper, the manager of the home finally asked me to write a long article for the monthly bulletin of the Social Ministry. I immediately carried out this task and the article was translated into Estonian by the German language group.

If I will find enough time, I would be prepared to volunteer again next year for social projects.

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### **Eugenio Marinetti** (Italian volunteer)

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### **Bedheim** (Germany)



I haven't had preconceived ideas or prejudices before going to Bedheim, because I was really prepared to this experience, although it was my first experience of this type and I didn't know anything of what I was expected to do. I can say with all my heart that I found the atmosphere I wished to find.

In the first days the cohabitation with other people of our age was a little boring, even if there was a very interesting exchange of ideas. With the arrival of boys and girls from all nationalities, I felt like if a spring wind was whispering.

we worked together and shared every moment of the day.

We ate together and the work in the kitchen was done by a different person of different nationality every day, so I had the opportunity to know the Korean kitchen, the Mexican and the Turkish one as well.

It was very interesting that all the young boys and girls explained their cultural habits using their food culture.

We had a lot of free time, so I had the time to visit different sites of Germany.

On Saturdays we were expected to go selling biological fruits and vegetables grown in the fields of the castle at the market of Coburg.

Twice a week some disabled boys came to the castle and it was exciting to see the interest they had in doing their work and the attention they paid in doing it.

Even if there was a big gap of age I didn't find an enormous distance between different generations.

I was one of them and when there was a problem it became a problem of everyone.

I had the proof of that when I had a problem with my car and everyone came to help me.

I can say it was a really positive experience, from the point of view of human feelings as in the practical experience. If I had the chance to live this experience again I'd do it even tomorrow.

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## **Franco Nespoli (Dutch volunteer)**

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### **Eboli (Italy)**



### **The training:**

On the 6<sup>th</sup> July I caught an aeroplane to Tallin, the Estonian capital, to take part to a training course for the project in Eboli (Italy), with the leading of Davide Di Pietro .

This experience was very interesting for me. We learnt how to manage problems such as speaking in a different language (during the meeting there was a double translation into only English and Russian) and to solve problems directly concerned to our future project. There were a lot of strange situations , but it was cool .

### **The project**

From 24 of July to 22 of august I took part to the project in Eboli organised by LEGAMBIENTE. I have to stress the importance of co-operation between over 55 and young volunteers (22+), I



believe it was very interesting both for me and for them. I would like to repeat this experience next year.

Now I start with some details :

a) the group was composed by 18 people, from both sexes, students and workers, from Italy and other European countries.

b) our tasks were :

- 1) keep clean a pinewood near the beach
- 2) build 10 picnic tables

c) we were organised into two turns: one in the morning and the other in the afternoon, and we used to work about 5 hours a day.

d) this project has been completed , but in the future there are other projects to improve the place:

- 1) construction of play tools for children in the garden
- 2) arrangement of tourist paths and fitness routes

these projects aim at improving Eco-tourism and at preserving this pinewood from waste

e) the organisation was perfect.

I hope that our work met one's target

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**Angelika Pilchler** (Austrian volunteer)

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**Manchester (UK)**





On 25 July, I arrived in Manchester together with another Austrian volunteer. Rory Daly picked us up at the airport and he brought us to our accommodation at the campus of the Salford University. The rooms were tiny, however we had our private bathroom. There was no food at the campus and the Campus restaurant was closed. We would have to go by train in the City Centre, but at the same time we had been warned by Rory Daly not to return after it became dark, because according to newspaper articles we resided in one of the poorest and dangerous quarters of England. However, we never got acquainted with the „numerous“ criminals in Salford. There were everywhere cameras installed in public areas and the house where we lived was lightened during the night with searchlight like a prison. The first night on the Campus, we were three of us. In addition, there was no functioning telephone in the house, but there was a telephone cabin nearby.

The next day, I passed my first working day with children whom I should teach happiness and interest in learning. The responsible project leader was highly committed to educate those children coming from very disadvantaged social surroundings. The children were very enthusiastic and you could recognise how they felt respected. In various groups, I could see what we should teach and I was impressed – although my work was reduced to observing the children. The following week, when the more „difficult“ children came, I was transferred to the museum and I had been given the option to decide by myself, where I wanted to work during the third week.

I decided for the museum, because there I had more contacts with different people. We had to interview visitors of the museum.

I got interesting insight into the work in a museum.

The responsible person in charge, Mr Brown, was always giving us the opportunity to do those jobs that were suited best for us. There were different kind of tasks including handicraft work with children. As the most visitors were children they offered a programme for all age groups. The behaviour of all the employees, both at the University and also at the Museum was extremely polite and warm. We always felt welcome and appreciated by our hosts.

Apart from the not perfectly secure accommodation at the Campus, it was a stay that brought very interesting aspects and new experiences. In the future, it should be avoided to accommodate older volunteers alone at the Campus without providing at least a functioning telephone in the house. However, I cannot judge whether Manchester is really that dangerous as we learned, but the number of cameras and the security instructions in the public means of transport cannot be without any reason.

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**Malgorzata Polanska** (Polish volunteer)

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**Manchester, The Monastery of St Francis and Gorton Trust** (UK)



The goal of this voluntary project was to lead workshops for children from local schools and other youth organisations, and prepare lanterns and torches for the lantern parade during Gorton Festival, on October 2<sup>nd</sup>.

I was working there with a colleague Vera, from Austria. Our accommodation was at Salford University campus.

First week our working hours were from 10:00AM to 4:00PM, this was the preparation stage:

- calling the schools and arranging meetings for workshops,
- designing lanterns and torches decorations,
- purchasing materials,
- preparing all necessary elements.

Starting from Monday Sept 13<sup>th</sup> we participated in one or two workshops per day. Children age: 5-7, number of children in one group: 22 – 30 in the schools, 8-12 in churches or youth clubs.

The morning and early afternoon sessions took place in local infants schools, there were also 4 evening sessions from 6:00PM to 8:00PM for Rainbows and Brownies and in the youth clubs. During the workshops we were assisted by 1 or two teachers and in numerous groups by extra 2 or 3 local volunteers.

We helped children to assembly lanterns, then to decorate lanterns and torches with paints, tissue paper, silver foil, colourful stripes, etc., using their imagination and creativity. Some results were fantastic! Lanterns and torches were then signed with children's names. Kids were supposed to collect them the day before the festival.

I've already received an e-mail information from the Trust: *"The lantern procession that you worked so hard on was a wonderful success. All went to plan - with several hundred children and parents carrying their lanterns through Gorton, accompanied at different parts of the route by a piper, the Brigade band and a Samba percussion band. The fireworks were spectacular - but over and above all else, the gentle walk through our community with everyone chatting with their friends and neighbours was the fruit of much hard work by many folk, yourselves included"...*

This stay in Manchester gave me also an opportunity to meet people truly devoted to work for the local community, using different instruments to integrate people (choir). It was also very interesting to visit schools which are so different from what we are used to see in Poland.

From the organisational point of view everything worked without any problems. I appreciate hard work of many people involved in the project, many thanks to FIYE people, to Rory and Dan from Salford Unity and to all Monastery of St. Francis and Gorton Trust staff.

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**Tatjana Kuruscheva and Natalia Stsegolihhna (Estonian volunteers)**

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### **Goriano Valli (Italy)**



#### **1. Preparatory seminar**

It was very important and most useful to take part in the preparatory seminar. All most important aspects of the program Still Active were covered in details. However it would be very much desirable to put a special attention to the route to Goriano in order to explain it precisely and avoid problems travelling to the venue.

#### **2. Travel**

We found that the best way of arranging our arrival would be: someone meets us at Tiburtino Station in Rome, puts to the bus to L'Aquila, host meets upon arrival there and takes to Convent in Goriano. The psychology of elderly people should be taken into account when planning travel to the host project. Also the fact that in smaller towns in Italy not everybody speaks English. It made our search for railway station in L'Aquila nearly impossible and created unwanted and very unpleasant nervous situation for us.

#### **3. Communication**

In general we liked our stay in Goriano. However we regret that our weak knowledge of English did not allow us to make deeper contact with other participants. It also lead to dissatisfaction of head of project Nanni Laurent and made our relations with him rather difficult and tense.

#### **4. Work**

The work was fine. It was not difficult, we could manage all tasks given to us. Here we would like to mention work in the kitchen with Mariangela, who kindly allowed us to watch the process of making Italian food and give her a hand to assist. We want to thank her for this. The food in Convent was excellent thanks to Mariangela's efforts!

Besides work in the kitchen we worked in the garden collecting berries, vegetables, cutting lavender, drying grasses, etc. It was quite interesting for us. We saw and learned many new things.

## 5. Leisure time

Fortunately for us there were other senior volunteers (from Austria). Without them it would be rather boring for us to stay among young people, who interests are quite different. With Austrians, who had own car, we went to see L'Aquila, which we liked a lot. Also we undertook several trips to mountainous villages to see pieces of local patrimony – churches, castles. Thus we visited several small villages and towns in the area. Also we went almost every evening to the village of Goriano and walked a lot on our own in the forest and mountains.

To be frank we, city people, felt a little bored in the tiny village - like cut from the rest of the world. Yet we saw many interesting things and all in all our experience was interesting and quite educational.

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**Franz Errath** (Austrian Volunteer)

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### **Eboli** (Italy)



### Host organization:

LEGAMBIENTE, group of Eboli 'Silaris', (*Circolo territorial ' Silaris' Eboli*). The small but extremely active LEGAMBIENTE group of Eboli looks after young volunteers of all ages from Italy and from other countries across Europe.

The city of EBOLI is few kilometres from Paestum and from the national park *Cilento* in the bay of Salerno. Nearby, there are attractive tourist sites of Pompei and the peninsula Sorrent (*Costiera Amalfitana*).

### Project:

The project aim in this year was to clean and to protect a COASTAL STRIP as well as the erection of leisure facilities in the wind protection belt. Numerous buildings, which have illegally been erected, have been removed in this area as well.

The municipality of Eboli, essential sponsor (and well also beneficiary) of this project, defined a 450 m long beach area for this project (altogether, estimated 16 hectares).

### Accommodation:

The working groups were hosted in the 'country house Falcone-Borsellino'. A very attractive building which is located near the coast (bed room with 4-8 beds). This villa was also built illegally, however was not torn down but confiscated and submitted to the municipality of Eboli for the use of charitable purposes and Organisations.

### Participant

Three groups of participants were involved:

1) Members of the local LEGAMBIENTE from Eboli, working in conducting and managing function but also actively took part within the project. As well as two "long time volunteers" from Estonia and Turkey.

2) Two labour camps were organised at this time.

One was an international camp (12 persons) from July 12th to 26th, consisting of people from seven different European countries in the age of 19 -27.

The second camp, lasting from August 2nd to 13th consisted of volunteers from Italy only. Next to the student-volunteers some 'older' LEGAMBIENTE members from northern Italy participated.

3) For the project two *Still Active* volunteers have been planned for. The second 'volunteer' however has arrived later with the second camp group.

### Catering:

Three meals per day have been provided by the LEGAMBIENTE group of Eboli. The preparation of the meals has been done by the volunteers themselves itself, in a kind of rotation system, partially with instructions partially in *selfmanagement*.

### Activity:

Although my Italian knowledge were very limited, from the very beginning I have very much been included in the line of information. Altogether, I took fully part in the group activities. The two groups were conducted by the two long time volunteers. My position could be referenced as a Co-leader.

Per week was one day to spend – in free arrangement – as kitchens- and housekeepingservice and one day freely for the inspection of the numerous sights.

The basic organisation was laid out in two shifts in which they carried out their daily work. The beach section was about 5 km away from our accommodation. This way was covered with bicycles. The morning shift started about 08.00 am, the afternoon shift started at about 2pm., mostly after lunch, which has been spent together.

The first week was exclusively dedicated to the collection of waste at the coast and in the quite big area of woodland. In the second week we worked in small groups, which on one hand continued with the collection of waste, on the other hand worked on posts for the delimitation between the pure sand beach and the to be saved dune stripe. Tables and benches have been built during the last week. Last but not least we started with the planning of children playgrounds and establishing of fire places and barbecue spots.

### Judgement of my stay:

Host organisation: The 'inner circle' of the LEGAMBIENTE Group in Eboli, (Leda, Dorothea, Mimo and Ester) is a very dedicated team of people who are thinking and acting alternatively.

From the beginning they have been very much treating myself with attention and respect. Also my efforts to integrate myself into the group itself have been appreciated a lot.

Project: The processing of the project has been highly professional. A geologist and a civil engineer (Francesco and **Rocco**) have been the real heads of the planning. Plans were available, a detailed introduction to the project contributed quite considerably to the appreciation of the activities as well as the motivation for the co-operation.

A similar project had already been started in the neighbourhood community of PAESTUM some years ago.

Accommodation: Architecturally extremely attractive, the house is often described as a colloquially mafia villa and is indeed a very solid construction. Heavy panelled doors, full marble bathroom and alike. Still, for our accommodation, the building had been cleared out completely and equipped with camping-beds. Too narrow for the first group which was a little smaller, the house has been clearly too small and too narrow for the second, the Italian camp, which has been considerably larger. The kitchen was very poor and very provisionally built in the former garage. I have been astonished that the quality of the meals have been so excellent -- one masterpiece of southern Italian improvising talent.

Altogether and despite the marble bath (without mirror though) – the accommodation was very spartanic and needed some time to get used to. The lack of any privacy is nevertheless- also for me as an Central European (also as a former soldier and certainly not being spoilt in this regard)- very difficult to bear with. Personally this was the greatest challenge of my stay.

Catering: As just mentioned the food was good till partly best quality and mostly more than sufficient. The quality was- primarily during the Italian group, during it has been cooked by the individual participants- very differently. However, this phase has also provided the possibility of being very creative. As an example together with the long-time volunteer Ozzi we have organised a Turkish-Austrian catering day. According to the applause, this was quite a successful meal.

At this point I would like give a special praise to Dorothea, who has been responsible for the kitchen under rather difficult conditions at hand during the international group.

Participant, group, work: Since this project was mainly construction and rearrangement, organisational talent has definitely been demanded. So to speak despite an ordinary day, no day was like the other and there was always a good chance to be surprised in any way. A broad variety of practical activities has been in demand: the collection of any kind of waste (up to dangerous things like a lot of injection needles or crowd wise condoms), cleaning a pizza stove-oven, care of the very neglected garden, the drive in of posts, assembly of the tables and benches, different other kind of work in the house and garden and various transportation.

The work in a southern country, especially during noon- the hottest time of the day- and particularly at the beginning needed some time of acclimatisation, but has been no problem at the end nevertheless.

All of the group participants has been a very pleasant choice of different people. The teamwork has been at a very high level, especially during the time with the Italian group. On the other side the international group has been a bit more diversified and too inhomogeneous. The engagement of all participants involved was astonishingly high (some of the older semesters in the Italian group needed some more time to get used to though). Altogether, LEGAMBIENTE seems to be a collecting point of interesting people.

Language, country and people, excursions: In regards to my limited knowledge about the Italian language I earlier wrote in my application: *'It is sufficient to show a good interest and the readiness to learn some words'*. This is sufficient for the daily work and for the interaction within the group itself, however to understand the connections between various things, this is too less. It was my luck that Dorothea has been born in Switzerland who has lived in Eboli/Battipaglia for 40 years. Only her explanations and interpretations -- not seldomly enriched by her own decades of experience -- allowed a qualified access to the often incomprehensible behaviours, caused by the differences in the mentality and ways of thinking.

The support for leisure time and excursions by the Eboli team was considerable high. Many evenings have been done solemnly. The pizza oven has often been used. The looser LEGAMBIENTE members and many friends also came to these occasions. There have always been many people around, something was going on at any point in time, so to speak. Many of Mimo and his friends have been playing instruments. The campfires on the beach added their part to the whole situation.

The excursions to the sometimes quite close sites were often extremely impressive. The Greek temples of Paestum, the city of Salerno, the Amalfitanische coast particularly Ravello, also Pompej and Agropoli. Excursions to the Vesuvius and to the island of Capri rounded off the picture. Stimulated by the book 'Christ came only until Eboli' I undertook a two-day journey to the Basilikata which (via Sapri and other places) finally led me to the coast of Cilento (among others Marina di Camerota and Velia's excavations). All in one extremely impressive!

Résumé: In the context of my former military career and by numerous contacts with other armies I have been able to collect certain experiences with other people and mentalities. However, at the end those were marked by approximately similar conditions (the armies of all countries kind of work the same way)- so country specific expression don't really appear. Therefore this way of life and work within this project has been a complete new experience full of impressions for myself. So has been getting acquainted with people in her environment and all of their peculiarities and habits .

I guess it has been a mutually studying and also to treasure the value of others. I have often sneered inwardly (fairly often outspoken as well) in case some organisational things didn't work the way they were supposed to. However, the degree to which my last evening has been organised, has been impressive for me. Everyone who got important to me, has been there, enough cars were ready to bring us to Campagna, a nice restaurant, many kind words and presents, a card was handed around and everyone wrote a couple of nice lines for my memory <sup>see</sup> below.

My high respect is for the leadership team of the LEGAMBIENTE group of SILARIS in Eboli. They are highly engaged and, although they are personalities, which can hardly be more different, there has always been a climate of co-operation, trying to achieve changes in the minds of the people.

Even if these surely weren't the typical Southern Italian people, the weeks in the bay of Salerno were an experience easily to be remembered and- under no circumstances I would like to miss it: *To get to know and to understand Italy – do it with LEGAMBIENTE .*

**Elisabeth Krejci (Austrian volunteer)**  
**Goriano Valli, Italy**  
**20.08.-03.09.2004**

Arrival: very exhausting (train-aeroplane-train-tube-bus-bus-bus-train)



Accommodation: modest, bunk bed, no cupboard, I had all my clothes in the suitcase

Ambience: very beautiful environment, wonderful renovated monastery

Activities: kitchen service (cleaning the kitchen, cutting vegetable, no cooking)  
gardening: cutting lavender (all kind of work with lavender), weeding,  
pick and cut pole beans  
reap and cut tomatoes  
sweep and clean the floors in the convent  
pick blackberries

The other volunteers 55+: two ladies from Estonia, a couple from Graz (Austria)  
There were also 4 young long-term volunteers  
and a group of about 25 Italian volunteers (until 30.08.)

I enjoyed my stay in Goriano Valli very much. My working plan was not very exhausting (from 8 am to 12.30 am). I would have been disposed to work in the late afternoon, too – the time until dinner at 8 pm was sometimes a bit long without working. Fortunately the Austrian couple had arrived by car and we could make some excursions in the wonderful and interesting surroundings. Sometimes we did a walking tour or we walked to Goriano Valli (about 1 km) and had a coffee or an ice-cream there.

We had good contacts to the volunteers from Estonia, but they spoke English quite badly so it was a little bit difficult to talk to each other.

We also had good contacts with the younger volunteers, especially during the meals we had a lot of fun.

The two leaders of the convent didn't contribute to a harmonic atmosphere, quite the contrary, the younger volunteers were rather scared of them.

Thanks to the friendship that had developed between the Austrian volunteers we managed to create a cheerful atmosphere and could also enjoy the wonderful environment. Last but not least it was a good feeling to do something useful and additionally spend some weeks in Italy that were a bit similar to a holiday.

Suggestions: I would have liked to work a bit more freely and creatively. I don't want to miss those two weeks in Goriano and I would be very pleased to participate in another EURAG-project in the future.

Thank you very much,  
Elisabeth Krejci

**Vera Hammer**  
**Manchester, UK (Monastery of St. Francis & Gorton Trust)**  
**31.08.-21.09.2004**

After a pleasant flight from Vienna to Manchester I was cordially received by Mr Rory Daly at the airport. Then we went to Salford Crescent by train and I could move into my “flat” where I should live for the next three weeks. From the window I had a wonderful view to three trees and an ample meadow.

The next morning we took a taxi to the office of Gorton Trust in East Manchester, where my place of work was. I was already very curious to get to know Ilma Scantlebury and all the other people working at the office. I was cordially received by them and Ilma showed me the wonderful and impressing church, the monastery and the monastery garden. It is incredible that the monastery is in such a bad state at the moment. The Gorton Trust aims at doing something against that bad state: they get involved in order to renovate the whole complex and to create a new centre for the community of Gorton. The community of Gorton organises various activities regularly, for example a choir (where I had the possibility to participate, too) and beginning of October a big festival takes place, with a procession with lanterns for the children.

My task was to help at the preparation for the procession with lanterns, another volunteer from Poland (Malgorzata Polanska, named Gosia) who arrived one week after me. From the beginning, I got along with her and the collaboration gave us great pleasure.

First of all, we had to decide in which way the lanterns should look like: we had two different kinds of lanterns. The children who should participate in the procession were aged from 5-8, and they were allowed to choose which lantern they would carry during the procession. The children could fabricate their personal lantern: we had organised workshops (2 hours) in the primary schools and in some youth groups. Myself, Gosia and some other people from the Gorton Trust could assist the teachers and children to fabricate the lanterns. I called the directors of the primary schools and the leaders of the youth groups to coordinate the dates for all the workshops.

After we had done all the preparation work, we could finally assist in the workshops. For me, it was a completely new experience and an great pleasure to work with little children and help them to do handicrafts. I was really very, very happy at this work. I still remember their voices when they needed some help... “Miss, Miss, Miss, please...” These hours spent with the children were unforgettable hours for me. As a result of our workshops, about 500 lanterns will illuminate the sky at the festival on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, and I will remember all the children of Gorton...

On September 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> the “Heritage-open-weekend” in Gorton took place. The inhabitants had the possibility to visit the church and get some information about the planned renovations. It was a very impressing experience to see so many people in the church, and it also proved the importance of this church for the community.

For me those three weeks in Manchester stand for a lot of positive experiences: I got to know new friends in England, I found a new friend from Poland, I could speak English for three weeks (which I enjoyed very much), I was impressed by the positive atmosphere in the primary schools and I enjoyed my work with the children.

Thank you very much again for having made all this possible!

Vera Hammer

**Hildegard Salmutter**  
**Manchester, UK (The Manchester Museum)**  
**25.07.-14.08.2004**

Arrival: 25.07.2004 Graz-Zurich-Manchester, arrival at the Manchester airport: 510 pm

Mr Rory Daly received me at the airport and we took the train to the campus of the University of Salford where my accommodation was.

My room was ok, I had a single room with separate shower and a common kitchen where we could meet with the other students and residents.

On Monday 25<sup>th</sup>, my first working day, Mr Rory Daly accompanied me to my working place. There we were cordially received by the director, Mr. Pete Brown.

My working programme was the following:

Working hours:

In the morning: 10 am – 12.30 am

In the afternoon: 1.30 pm. – 3 pm

In the morning I was occupied with numerating and labelling the shell collection, in the afternoon I could interview the visitors of the museum.

Even though my English isn't perfect, Mr Pete Brown assigned this task to me, and I think I performed my task quite well.

At the museum's coffee bar we could have a warm lunch, in the evening we could cook something at home.

I enjoyed the weekends very much, the weather was fine too, so we had the opportunity to make excursions in the surroundings. We went to Windermere-Lakeland by train, we spent one day in Liverpool and one day in Chester. These are characteristically English towns with wonderful houses and gardens.

My voluntary service in Manchester was a very pleasant change to my every day life as a retired person and I would be disposed to participate another time in such an exchange programme. Thank you very much for this enriching experience,

Hildegard Salmutter

**Verena Perlhefter**  
**Manchester, UK (The Manchester Museum)**  
**09.08.-03.09.2004**

In May 2004 I read an advertisement in the “Standard” (an Austrian newspaper) that I found very interesting: they were looking for volunteers over 55 who were “still active”, for an international exchange programme in summer 2004. I answered and asked for more information. There were projects in Italy that I found very interesting, but unfortunately I don’t speak Italian and so I decided to apply for three different projects in England. Finally I was accepted as a volunteer for the Manchester Museum (Coordinator/ Inspiring Learning Coordinator).

In the training seminar 21-22 June 2004 in Graz we were prepared for our voluntary service abroad. The different projects were presented and we could get to know people who were also interested in an international voluntary service. Because of our similar interests and attitude to the subject, we had a very harmonic, amicable atmosphere from the very beginning.

I got into contact with the responsible persons for the Manchester Project and got information about my future tasks in the museum.

August 9<sup>th</sup> I went to Manchester by plane, at the airport I was cordially received by Mr Rory Daly who accompanied me to the University Campus of Salford, where my accommodation was. He warned me that the Campus was bordered by a notorious slum, and that we should avoid to go through the wonderful park because there had been two hold-ups during the day! Obviously these warnings didn’t fail to intimidate me... and I was glad to reach my room without any incidents. The room was small and simple but I didn’t miss anything.

In the common kitchen I met two other volunteers, Mrs Angelika Pichler and Mrs Hilde Salmutter. I was received in a very friendly way and they invited me for dinner. They also invited me for breakfast, because I hadn’t have the time to buy anything. They gave me a lot of information, tips and tricks for the weeks to come.

But then everything was different, because there would be no voluntary service at all! Unfortunately a terrible rheumatism put an end to my enthusiasm before I could even start my voluntary service: additionally, the steel springs of the old mattress were too much for my spinal column. Angelika and Hilde were very generous and prepared all the meals for me – it was impossible for me to do the shopping myself. Even Rory came to visit me. After three days of martyrdom I wanted to consult a doctor but obviously at that time nearly all doctors were on holiday. So I went to a Chinese clinic and Dr. Mo managed to help me so I could at least make shake hands with the director of the museum and apologize for not being able to turn up. The hole medical treatment would have cost 500 Euro, so I decided not to stay any longer, but to go home to Austria. At home I got various medical treatments, and only end of October I was free of pain again.

**Franz Gruber**  
**Tallinn and Viljandi, Estonia**  
**24.08.-12.09.2004**

Arrival: by Bus (Eurolines) from Vienna-Kaunas-Tallinn (about 1700 km), after 30 hours arrival in Tallinn at 8 pm, where I was received by the coordinator Ave Bremse.

The next day: informal meeting about my tasks in the deaconry Viljandi

26 August: bus to Viljandi

Tasks: in the deaconry St. Paul, there is a church built in 1866 that is being renovated for the first time. Gardening and working in the house.

Accommodation: in a house of the deaconry, Viljandi is a beautiful small town (10,000 inhabitants).

6 September: bus to Tallinn, where I worked at the office of the deaconry in Tallinn.

11 September: Return voyage to Vienna.

Franz Gruber