

**Survey of best practices and training methodologies to involve senior volunteers in civil society organisations' activities and projects: the cases of Italy and Austria**

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***"For age is opportunity no less  
Than youth, though in another dress,  
And as the evening twilight fades away  
The sky is filled with stars, invisible by day"***

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## Foreword

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This survey was the preliminary research of the European project named "Still Active".

These activities were co-ordinated by the Italian organization, LUNARIA and carried out by a partnership composed by three international Networks, AVSO-The association of Voluntary Service Organisations, The Alliance of the European Voluntary Service Organisations and EURAG-The European Federation of Older persons. Other partners include the University of Salford (UK), an Italian environmental organization (Legambiente), a Research Institute of Frankfurt (ISIS) and the Municipality of Roma.

As a matter of fact, thanks to this survey, mainly limited to the two countries who had the major participation in the project "Still Active" (Austria and Italy) we have discovered that very few or limited experiences concern the training on issues such as Intercultural learning or conflict resolution or motivational areas. In this sense we worked on a sort of virgin land and we think that through the results of this project it is possible to acknowledge it.

It was then even more important for us to understand what happens in the field of training for senior volunteers. Of course it is different to train someone for a project in the same area where he lives and for a project abroad: one useful result of this research was that we realised that we had to focus on all the features that were not touched by the other kind of trainings. This is why in our course we did not give any indication on how to deal with a specific project but we hoped that we managed to give the keys to enter any kind of project leaving the specific training on specific things (such as the animation with children or the setting up of an art exhibition) to those organisations that already do it and very well. This is why in the two cases studied we focused on the very interesting experiences performed in this field hoping in a future co-operation and synergy with these organisations and their training skills.

# 1. General Key issues on Volunteering

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## Definition of Formal Volunteering

Formal senior volunteering is an activity, which takes place in not-for-profit organisations or projects and is undertaken:

- To be of benefit to the community and the volunteer;
- Of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion;
- For no financial payment;
- In designated volunteer positions only.

## 1.1 Principles of Volunteering

Volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer. According to this perspective:

- Volunteer work is unpaid
- Volunteering is always a matter of choice
- Volunteering is not compulsorily undertaken to receive pensions or government allowances.
- Volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in the activities of their community
- Volunteering is a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs
- Volunteering is an activity performed in the not-for-profit sector only
- Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work
- Volunteers do not replace paid workers nor constitute a threat to the job security of paid workers
- Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others.
- Volunteering promotes human rights and equality.

## 1.2 Measuring Volunteering

### Three criteria for volunteering

The three criteria given below are broad enough to include virtually all forms of volunteering found around the world, yet they effectively distinguish volunteering (specifically seniors) from other forms of behavior that may superficially resemble it.

***1. It is not undertaken primarily for financial gain.***

However, anyone who volunteers should certainly have all legitimate expenses arising out of their activities reimbursed; this is important, as it prevents them from being out of pocket as a consequence of their involvement and therefore helps to ensure that people with limited financial resources are not excluded from volunteering.

***2. It is undertaken of one's own free will.***

Free will is a basic tenet of voluntary action, but people who volunteer seldom do so entirely voluntarily: They are usually under some pressure, either from their peers or from their own feelings of social obligation.

However, this criterion does help to distinguish genuinely senior voluntary volunteering from situations where there is explicit external coercion of the individual: for example, where schools require pupils to volunteer; where the employees of a company with an official volunteering scheme are required to take part (and the "volunteering" is entered on the person's employment record); or where governments offer young men the chance to do community service as an alternative to military service).

***3. It brings benefits to a third party as well as to the people who volunteer.***

This criterion helps to distinguish volunteering from a purely leisure activity; It includes friends, neighbours, and such abstract notions as "society" or "the environment," only excluding the immediate family of the person who volunteers. This enables mutual aid and participation in a political party or single-issue campaign to be treated as forms of volunteering that are just as valid as providing services. These three criteria provide ample space for the full range of volunteering. It would be a mistake to insist that volunteering can only take place through an organisation of some kind—non-profit, governmental, or private—as such a criterion would exclude a great deal of mutual aid as well as the vast amount of unmanaged help that goes on between neighbours and friends. Similarly, it is not suggested that volunteering should always involve a substantial, regular, and long term commitment, as this criterion would ignore the sporadic nature of much volunteering, managed and unmanaged.

## **1.3 The four types of volunteering**

By applying the above criteria to the myriad of activities that make up volunteering, it has been possible to propose four basic types of voluntary activity. These are intended to be working definitions only, and in practice there is

considerable overlap between them. Each of the types of volunteering listed below can be managed (that is, carried out through an organisation) or unmanaged (that is, carried out as loosely organised or spontaneous community action or as an individual initiative).

***1. Mutual aid (also called self-help).***

In many countries of the world, mutual aid is the dominant system of social and economic support for much of the population. In Eritrea, for example, the *harambi* tradition is vital in the provision of health care, water, and education; in Thailand, villagers jointly manage resources, such as forests and wells, and jointly repair roads. Mutual aid is also widespread in industrialised countries, particularly in the form of organisations set up by a group of people all affected by the same problem, such as unemployment or a specific illness. Although self-help meets the three criteria outlined above, its practitioners rarely describe what they do as “volunteering.”

***2. Philanthropy or service to others.***

People give service to the community as a whole—for example, by visiting, befriending, teaching, and mentoring others—rather than to a specified group to which they themselves belong. Much of this type of volunteering is carried out through non-profit and statutory organizations, and is therefore more widespread in industrialized countries, where such organizations are more numerous.

***3. Campaigning and advocacy.***

People volunteer out of a desire for social change and social justice: for example, activism in an environmental movement; advocacy on behalf of people with disabilities; a group of tenants lobbying for improvements to be made to a housing estate; or the worldwide campaign to ban landmines, which is estimated to have involved 300 million volunteers in a hundred countries.

***4. Participation and self-governance.***

People become involved in the processes of governance: for example, as committee members of their village water and sanitation project, as elected local representatives, or as members of government consultative bodies. This type of volunteering is found in all countries, but it achieves its most developed form in those with a strong tradition of civic society.

## 2. Volunteer Training

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Volunteer training is not as clearly defined as traditional vocational education and training, directly related to paid employment outcomes.

Also, while volunteering is recognised as being of great economic significance, the issue of volunteer training has not been tackled consistently across Ngo's and other organisations belonging to the non profit sector. In 2000, Austria and the U.K. counted approximately 1.1 million adult volunteers. The majority were between 35 to 64 years of age and had full-time paid jobs. The volunteer workforce is biggest in community/welfare, education/training/youth, health and sport/recreation sectors. This survey focuses on the areas of Sport/Recreation, Arts/Culture and Community Services. The findings verified the significance of the volunteers to these Ngo's and associations. The most of these organisations, relied on volunteers to survive, accounting for between 50% and 90% of their entire workforce. The research found that there are three groupings of common volunteer roles undertaken across all sectors.

These are in the following areas:

- People oriented roles, such as customer service and leadership, where people are dealing with other people;
- Management roles such as governance, board, committees;
- Operational roles such as administrative backrooms work.

There are also some common issues that affect all the organisations and associations concerned. These are:

- Insurance and increased regulatory compliance;
- Recruitment of volunteers;
- Working with children - police checks, who bears the cost and how to keep the checks up-to-date;
- Keeping up-to-date with changing technology in the workplace;
- Ageing senior volunteer workforce.

In the next five to ten years Austria and Italy, among the others, will have an ageing, cultural diverse but better educated and skilled volunteer workforce who will demand ongoing skills and knowledge development.

As well as requiring knowledge and skills in the areas where they volunteer in, they will also need to be aware and keep abreast of changes in the regulatory environment and compliance issues to meet their obligations as senior volunteers.

Most organisations currently require senior volunteers to undertake some sort of training. The majority is run by associations of voluntary service in-house and ranges from non-accredited induction courses to school or third age universities.

The research identified two key areas of concern with regards to training:

- Inadequate or no training of board and committee members;
- Reluctance of volunteers to retrain or update their skills.

The following skills were identified as important for senior volunteers.

- Personal skills such as customer service and conflict management;
- General administrative training in such areas as: keyboard skills, phone manner and communications skills; book-keeping and accounting;
- Leadership, governance and management training;
- Training and refreshment in the use of technology and linguistic tools
- Mentoring or training for trainers.

Whilst the need for volunteer training was universally accepted, not all the organisations have a real knowledge of the current training environment. Additionally, it was found that there is a great deal of confusion and lack of knowledge about existing senior training offered by different institutions and sectors.

## **2.1 Type of training required and preferred delivered method**

Training should be a mixture of formal and non-formal courses.

Formal courses are sometimes perceived as too hard for volunteers and can scare people off; formal training than is not seen as essential. The majority of volunteers are not job seekers who use this as a pathway and do not feel the need to have a formal training. Formal training is not seen as essential but *recognition* is important. Recognition of skills and competencies is an important way to recognise the contribution of volunteers training needs to be tailored to the group at hand and it needs to be aware of issues and priorities of the volunteers; relevance and timeliness is essential to engage this group of people who feel that their time is what they give. Training should be delivered in a just-in-time manner. Some volunteers are just needed for short-term projects for two to three days or for specific event and need training just before the event.

Training should be mapped to formal courses; some senior volunteers may wish to use this as a pathway to a formal qualifications training needs to be flexible. Formal training or alternative training is perceived as being unresponsive to the needs of the volunteers and too structured.

Delivery of training should be in the community when volunteers are mostly community based and don't want to travel. Training should not be delivered in an institutionalised setting.



## 2.2 Current training for volunteers

Most of the organisations do require that their volunteer workforce undertake some sort of training. This ranges from non-formal in-house inductions through to Diploma level leadership training. It seems that requirement to undertake formal accredited training of volunteers is directly related to safety requirements and/or working with children or people with special needs. Most organisations have a policy of designated volunteers position with position descriptions that spelt out the requirements of the position including the training required, both formal and non-formal. The majority of training is done in-house with training outsourced to either a non-registered specialist-training organisation.

### *Emergency services, community services and outdoor recreation*

Emergency services, community services and outdoor recreation organisations have the most strenuous and extensive training requirements of all sectors. The training is generally run in-house as the organisations themselves. These organisations require volunteers to undergo ongoing training to keep their skill level at the required level. There is inadequate training for senior volunteers.

### *Sport*

In the sports area there are a range of approaches to training of volunteers, some organisations have very structured formal training (Austria, Germany) and others do very little (Italy). Many run annual training workshops for officials where new rules and practices are presented. In most cases however, the most senior officials and coaches are trained and the trickle down effect is assumed though rarely does this happen in practice. Formal training is available for paid officials and coaches, these are either run in-house by the Associations or through the Italian Sports' Commission. It appears that this training is not applied to volunteers.

### *Cultural Institutions*

Cultural institutions are less likely to use formal training as their volunteer base, as seen in previous comments, tend to be older and better educated and don't require or want a certified qualification. All of the cultural organisations undertake volunteer training in-house and initial training is not an issue, but there is some reluctance on behalf of the existing volunteers to undertake more training and upgrade their skills. There is inadequate training for senior volunteers.

Other comments of interest are:

- Training the trainer is required in many organisations. This applies particularly in organisations where existing volunteers' train new volunteers, they can transfer

'bad' or 'outdated practices' and are often not particularly adapt at training effectively.

- do training over time, not just a one off in the life of a volunteer
- Find out what volunteers' skills are and use them rather than train.
- Sporting clubs would rather take risks than get people to undertake training.
- Health – welcoming skills and also inclusion skills i.e. making people feel welcome when they come to a club.
- Administrators get little training if any.
- At Board level there is informal ad hoc training.

## **2.3 Is the current training of volunteers adequate?**

There is a great deal of disparity on this subject between different associations or informal groups. Where formal training is already in place, such as in the emergency services, community services and outdoor recreation areas, in general the training is satisfactory but that there is always room for improvement. Cultural institutions acknowledge that their volunteer training is adequate but could always be improved. Inadequate training is in common in many sports, where an inconsistent approach to training of volunteers is prevalent. In some instances there is no training at all of volunteers at the grass roots level.

There are a number of responses to the question of, "what areas training is needed in?" The responses are:

- There is a distinct lack of training for board and committee members
- People are too busy getting the job done to have time to plan how to get the job done better.
- Getting volunteers to attend training is sometimes a problem
- Insufficient resources from our perspective and insufficient time from the volunteers, specially seniors
- Senior Volunteers are happy to give their time which is what they do and that it is their contribution and may be reluctant to attend training
- Inconsistent approach to training is prevalent

## **2.4 In which area is training needed?**

There is little dissention about the need for training and the areas needed in areas consistent with the findings so far. The areas that are identified as needing training are in the common roles that volunteers undertake across all sectors. They are in:

- Customer service roles and leadership roles;
- Governance/board of management, committees roles, operational tasks
- Administrative back room work

The following areas were identified as ones where volunteers need training.

- Customer service skills;
- Conflict management;
- General administrative training needed in areas such as: keyboard skills, phone manner and communications skills; book keeping and accounting
- Leadership, governance and management training;
- Training and upskilling in the use of technology;
- Mentoring or train the trainer training is required, especially to stop out-of-date practices being passed down;
- Where accredited training is not required, volunteers may like to have formal recognition of their skills.

There is consensus across all organisations about this. Other common threads are:

- Training should be a mixture of formal and non-formal courses. Formal courses are sometimes perceived as too hard for volunteers and can scare people off;
- All training needs to be tailored to the group at hand and then, needs to be an awareness of issues and priorities of the volunteers;
- There is hostility from volunteers about 'retraining' or 'upskilling';
- Volunteers need leadership training;
- Some volunteers are just needed for short-term projects, it is important that those volunteers skills are identified and used.
- Member protection – what you can and can't do with kids, i.e. being aware of what is inappropriate behaviour, such as not putting arms around kids or touching their heads etc;
- It would be beneficial to have training mapped to accredited courses and doing a course – there would be a place for it but are not prepared for cost.

## **2.5 Knowledge of the current training system**

The majority of organisations does not have a great knowledge of current training system. There is also confusion about the different types of training offered by different institutions and sectors for volunteers.

### **2.5 a How can volunteers' skills and knowledge be both recognised and developed by the Training system.**

No-one has a definitive answer to this question however some interesting comments are now under discussion.

- Ultimately the more direct the recognition, the more meaningful for the senior volunteer
- Standards are important, certified qualifications create a standard and validates volunteering.
- Existing industry qualifications should be mapped against qualifications and gaps identified to produce a better qualification.
- Any system of skills recognition needs to be adaptable to the specific activities the volunteers are conducting. Also needs to be accessible and cost effective
- Flexibility, locally without too much paperwork or time imposition, with focus on specific competencies.

## **2.5 b obstacles to train volunteers**

While there is consensus about the need to have better trained volunteers, there are also major obstacles that need to be overcome. Below are some obstacles identified which also impact on the delivery of training:

- Cost of training – who pays, the volunteer, the organisation, the government or a combination?
- There is hostility from volunteers about 'retraining' or 'upskilling', which needs to be tackled before embarking on training. The impetus may be the necessity to undertake certified training in order to fulfil regulatory requirements or employer requirements;
- Overcome the concept that time is the only thing a volunteer is giving;
- Retention of senior volunteers is an issue for many organisations, one of the side effects is the reluctance to invest in training;
- Change and keeping up-to-date. This is an issue that not only affects volunteers but also the population at large. Providing relevant training in a rapidly changing environment. This includes the changing requirements of board members to keep abreast with government requirements; societal change and increased expectation of people in all situations. Also the changing pace of technology.
- People are too busy getting the job done to have time to plan how to get the job done better.
- Insufficient resources from organisations perspective and insufficient time from the volunteers
- Volunteers are happy to give their time which is what they do and that it is their contribution and may be reluctant to attend training;

## **2.6 Should the Training system meet current and future needs?**

Consensus is that the Training system is really the only system that is equipped to meet the current and future training needs of volunteers. The training system,

in its broadest context, should have the capacity and flexibility to recognise the skills and knowledge of volunteers and to meet current and future needs of organisations, which utilise the services of volunteers. If the training is to be relevant it needs to be delivered within a recognised environment.

There is an issue with the delivery of training. There needs to be flexibility in the delivery that is in tune with the needs of the volunteers and the volunteering organisations. There are multiple ways of learning and associations perception is that is not meeting those needs.

There needs to be flexible training or mentoring done in an informal way, which still ties into accredited training. The form of delivery suggested was through Community Neighbourhood houses. Ideally training should be a combination of accredited and non-accredited; however there are the issues of standards and consistency that can only be addressed by accredited training. The other concern is of costs to the volunteer. There is a strong belief that the volunteer should not pay for training and that in many cases the organisation cannot afford to train if they are not themselves.

Suggested approaches for training is via a pilot scheme in one area – to refine the concept and get it right first before expanding it to all associations. Also there needs to be recognition of skills and knowledge. This is important and can be achieved by greater use of recognition of prior learning and current competence, however these need to be less onerous than they now are. These processes can alleviate the training burden for senior volunteers.

## **2.7 Key Recommendations**

- Over the next five years there will be a need to increase volunteer training across all sectors in Austria, Germany, United Kingdom and Italy.
- Training should be a mixture of accredited and non-accredited courses for seniors.
- Training needs to be delivered in a flexible and responsive manner.
- Funding for training should be sourced from government and private sources.

There is consensus from all industry sectors and associations consulted, that in the next five to ten years we will have an ageing, cultural diverse but better educated and skilled senior volunteer workforce. Because these volunteers are used to being 'trained' it is likely that they will demand ongoing knowledge and skill development in the areas that they volunteer in.

They will also require ongoing training in response to changes in the regulatory environment, compliance and occupational health and safety issues to meet their obligations as a volunteer.

## 2.7 a-Key skills required by volunteers over the next five years.

Senior Volunteers will need to be trained in the following areas.

### Skills required

- Customer service skills;
- Conflict management;
- Communication skills.

Volunteers are placed in positions where they meet people sometimes emotionally challenged. **Communication skills** such as welcoming skills and inclusion skills, overcome the exclusive 'club' mentality where a few people have remained in key positions and do not welcome new blood.

Leadership and operational tasks such as those needed in supervisory and administrative roles, many organisations are entirely run by volunteers who have no skills in operational areas. Senior Volunteers run 90% of sporting organisations. Many cultural properties are run entirely by volunteers. Board leadership, governance and management training; all seniors volunteers need to be well versed in their responsibilities, occupational health and safety training, response to increased work coverage and insurance compliance. Training and upskilling in increased use of technology.

Mentoring or train the trainer; training is often undertaken in-house, passed down from one generation to the next. Training done in this manner needs some quality control to ensure that the volunteer is trained properly.

If the trainer is not appropriately trained then 'bad' habits and incorrect information can be passed along. Also it can be a deterrent for the new volunteer. Behaviour and member protection training, response to antidiscrimination legislation and legal requirements for people dealing with children. Many volunteers have been in the same positions for a long time and are not aware of the change in legal requirements, i.e. what boundaries are there when dealing with children, ugly parent syndrome, confidentiality issues - what information are you allowed to disclose.

## 2.7 b-Further investigation

- This is a scoping study that requires more in-depth analysis on associations and Ngo's basis, particularly in the area of Sport.
- Sport needs to have an additional comprehensive study undertaken across all sports. This should be divided into junior (children) and senior sporting groups as they have some different issues. I.e. A consistent approach would be desirable in training in this area as would greater promotion of what the training sector can do in this area.
- Lack of knowledge and confusion about the current senior training is crippling the take-up of appropriate training in all areas and this needs to be addressed.
- Map current industry training against existing training packages.

### 3. Training of Senior Volunteers

Like any training or skills and knowledge development, senior volunteer training needs to be directly related to association needs as well as being examined in the context of the broader volunteering environment. When predicting the demand of training for organisations a number of factors need to be examined to put training into senior context. Broadly speaking the issues that contextualise training include:

- Issues and trends facing the third sector;
- Nature of work undertaken– current and future;
- Number of people involved in the voluntary service – current and projected;
- Demographics of the target group.

Once those parameters have been established more specific issues relating to training can be examined.

Those issues are:

- Competence of senior volunteer workforce – current and future;
- Needs of the individual;
- Needs of the employer;
- Type of training required – certificated or not;
- Who pays;
- Who delivers.

Senior volunteer training is not as clearly defined as vocational training which is directly linked to paid employment. Whilst volunteering is recognised as being of great economic significance worldwide, the training of senior volunteers across the entire spectrum of the community is only touched upon. The biggest issue is the definition of volunteering itself (this is a specific topic of Italian situation).

Many volunteers don't realise what they are doing, while others who actively volunteer, are proud to be a volunteer and often define themselves by their volunteering role. Senior volunteers are found across many different areas and the number of volunteers are much larger than is counted by the government or by organisations themselves. Senior volunteers come from 55-65 age groups, many walks of life and across different socially and culturally diverse groups.

Senior volunteers are part of the hidden workforce in our community and are often stereotyped as only working in the community and health sectors with the 'at risk' population. In fact, many of the roles that volunteers undertake, are not always instantly recognised by the greater community. For example, many of our general population would not know that;

- A great proportion of guides at the Museum are senior volunteers;



- People running many of our major non-professional sporting events are senior volunteers;
- The majority of sporting associations have a 90% volunteer workforce;
- A great proportion of regional historic properties are entirely run by senior volunteers;
- Most of the school assistant to help children to across the road are senior volunteers.

In these instances at least, both the organisations and the people recognise that they are senior volunteers.

There is however, the hidden volunteer, who is rarely acknowledged and can be defined as the support or secondary volunteer. They could be: the person reading with children at school once a month or doing canteen duty at the local sporting club, the person who is handing out how-to-vote cards at elections or cleaning; the person running a class occasionally at the University of the Third Age or local community centre, the person at the working bee who cleans the gardens at the elderly citizens centre. All of these activities are undertaken by senior volunteers in several European countries. The issue is that many do not define themselves as volunteers, they see themselves as donating their time to a worthy cause or to a friend or to their children and are often called 'helpers'. The reason for raising the issue of the support or secondary volunteer is that it highlights the range of areas where volunteers are engaged and it also brings out the breadth and diversity of volunteers and the lack of understanding of what a volunteer is. Like the hidden unemployed, the hidden carers and the hidden workforce, the hidden senior volunteer is there and needs to be acknowledged and recognised.

The hidden volunteer will be an issue for organisations, government and the greater community as informal estimates put the size of this group as at least double the size of those formally counted as a volunteer. The implications of recognising the importance of this group are enormous, not only in the economic impact but also with regards to insurance and also in training of the volunteer workforce in the long term.

## 4.The Case of Italy

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### 4.1 Learning by experience. Best practices and training methodologies for involving volunteers in civil society organisations' activities

This section of our report is based on the training experience of the Italian voluntary organisations.

The main tool we used to compare their practices is the one of the semi-structured interview. With this we tried to analyse the voluntary service in the light of **training methodologies for applicant volunteers**, and if possible, we tried to set up which relation exists between this training and the age of the volunteers. The idea was to create a focus on aged people as volunteers and on their learning opportunities.

*To investigate other revealing elements of many organisations instead, we used the web when their websites seemed to be exhaustive for our aim.*

*We met people in charge for training in **Cesv** (Centre of Services for Voluntary Sector), in **Anteas** (National association for the Third active age), in **Caritas** (The most important Italian Charity), in **Fipecc** (Italian Federation for Lifelong Learning), in **Fivol** (Italian Foundation for Voluntary Service) and in **Torre di Babele**, an Italian Language school for foreign people that works especially with retired and aged people.*

*As for the training courses we've found on the web instead, many of them are managed by NGO in order to prepare to the voluntary service in developing countries. Besides that, is easy to find online interesting information and detailed programs of training courses for volunteers, managed by many local organisations.*

*Some interesting websites exhaustive in terms of volunteer's training are the website of **Cvs** (Local Conference of Voluntary Service) of **Svi** (International Voluntary Service), of **Iris** (Network for Innovation and Development), of **Forum di Solidarietà**, of **Sci** (International Civil Service), of **Accri** (International Christian Association of Co-operation), of **Focsiv** (Federation of Christian Structures for International Voluntary Service) of **Cnv** (National Centre for Voluntary Service) and of **Cipsi** (Coordinamento di iniziative popolari di solidarietà internazionale).*

*Finally, an important contribution for our report came from every website of the different local "**Centre of Services for Voluntary Sector**" recently moved in every Italian Region.*

## 4.2 “Which way to volunteer..” How volunteers are involved in organisations’ activities

*The report brings out that the **recruitment of volunteer** is usually carried out through classic tools (leaflets, press releases, web and so on).*

*It’s of course easy to reach and increase the target when the organisation is well spread throughout the country and when it is well known. For example Caritas, the main pastoral charity in Italy, can make use in the aim of recruiting, of the parishes and of their recreation centres in addition to the traditional tools.*

*In the case of the second level associations, the recruitment is not managed from them but from the organisation where the volunteer will work. In fact, this kind of associations deals training courses and other services for the organisations that at the end will employ the volunteers.*

An important element noticed by the interviewed is the importance of **networking**. In fact not only the second level organisations carry out services like counselling and addressing of the volunteers, but at the end every subjects involved in this sector try to do it. They encourage volunteer to do activities and relating training courses suitable to them, also bringing people in contact with the right people.

*The stage of recruitment is followed usually by a phase of mutual acquaintance, with a first interview to admitting the volunteer into the organisation. In the next stage there’s a series of evaluations of the expertise, aptitudes and motivations of the applicant volunteer. At the end is set the **training course** to prepare the volunteer in the best way.*

## 4.3 “Having the makings” The role of associations in the choice of voluntary service

Volunteers are not really selected if we think to the common sense of personal selection.

*Anyway the majority of the interviewed answered in the same way to the questions relevant to the evaluation of volunteers. They noticed first, a natural way of creaming off for that volunteer that has not the makings. Many people ask for information on the training and became aware by lone of any ineptitude or obstacle to come on duty with voluntary service.*

*People in charge of training anyway, plays an important role in **counselling the volunteers**.*

*In the case of an association of voluntary service, the trainer will be also **Tutor** of the volunteers during their service, in the case of a second level organisation instead, relationship between trainers and volunteers, after the course, will be occasional and not specific.*

*Almost every vocational training we analysed, provide for some **check phases**, differing in the amount (only one on the beginning, one on the beginning and one*

at the end, or more than one), or in the ways (individual questionnaire or common session).

Anyway in general the experience of people in charge for training is an important tool to understand not so much if someone can be a volunteer, as more which kind of activity is suitable to him.

According to this, the interviewed answered following their different points of view. For example, the advisor for the training for voluntary service in Centre of services for voluntary sector in Lazio, noticed an important responsibility of Cesv in being able for example to discourage some youngsters to serve with terminally-ill. This means that Cesv is responsible in front of the applicant volunteers, in order to give them a positive impact with the service, and in front of the users in order to assure the best way in helping them.

The advisor for Voluntary Office in Caritas instead, she emphasised as an important feature of the attendant volunteer, his ability to fit to an idea of service pre-determined. This is important in order to guard, both the operator and the user, from any problems caused by one's own initiative of the unskilled volunteers.

Of course in this case the figure of the area's co-ordinator is essential. He has to be able to **mediate** between the instinct of the attendant volunteer and an approach more rational to the activities.

#### **4.4 " Identity Card of the volunteer". Portrait of the volunteers according to the most common typologies in the associations**

According to what is noticed by our interviews, and to what is noticeable on the web, a standard portrait of the volunteer doesn't exist. In fact the organisations work with all sort of people of any age.

Anyway in which is concerned with official data, the steady volunteers are mainly middle-aged (46-65 years for 38,4% of the units) and so they are at the height of their personal and professional maturity. Instead youngsters (fewer than 30 years) prevail only in 8,3% of the units. This reveals not only a difficulty in turnover but also a possible difficulty in the **intergenerational** common life in the voluntary organisations.

Instead according to the gender, there's not percentage discard: women represent 50,8% of the active volunteers also if the voluntary organisations with an exclusive or prevailing female presence are lesser in front of the one with a masculine dominance. This is proved also by the fact that women are maximum in charge only in 3 organisations on 10 and almost ever in the one with prevailing female presence.<sup>1</sup>

Another important element carried out is that the majority of the volunteers are already employed in other activities, in this sense having a job is not an obstacle to the voluntary service.

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<sup>1</sup> From the third Survey of Fivol on the Voluntary Organisation by Renato Frisanco

*According to the differences depending on the age, one of the most answer of the interviewed was that to an older age of the volunteer correspond an **added value** in the quality of the service, and in the mood of the operator.*

*This is the result of the higher experience of the older people, often because of their life in which probably they have felt sometimes troubles and suffering. These hard situations increased for sure their ability to get in touch with people in trouble in an empathetic way.*

*Anyway, according to our remarks, all the people working in voluntary organisation thinks to the intergenerational exchange as very important both inside mixed aged classes, and during the real voluntary service carried out by people from different generations.*

*The interviewed noticed that it follows an interesting dialogue, stirring for old people and a source of thinking for youngsters.*

## **4.5 “You may have been told that...” Main contents of training to volunteer**

*Within the wide variety of contents broached in the training courses to volunteer, first we can make a differentiation between local voluntary service and international voluntary service mostly carried out in developing countries. In this last case, the first course is usually based on the fundamentals of the international co-operation.*

*With regard to the first courses for local attendant volunteers instead, these are managed both from the voluntary organisations and from second level organisation like the “Centre of Services for Voluntary Sector”.*

*Among the main contents we traced comparing dozen courses for voluntary service, we noticed those prevailing framework:*

Historical, institutional and relevant to general knowledge

**Including these recurring:**

- *Historical retreating of the origins of voluntary service*
- *Voluntary Service and the law 266 of 1991*
- *Voluntary Service and the European Union*
- *Basic set of rules to manage Voluntary Service*
- *Integration between services and networking: public services and third sector*
- *History of the organisation where the service will be carried out*
- *Contents linked to the specific area where the service will be carried out*
- *Basic elements of informatics*

Motivational

**Including these recurring:**

- *What means active citizenship*
- *The idea of solidarity*
- *The idea of care and trust*
- *The ethic face of voluntary service*
- *Set up voluntary service in the daily practices*
- *Identity and role of voluntary service*
- *The reasons to volunteer*
- *The empowerment in sharing the territory, involving youngsters*
- *Limits and strength of voluntary service*
- *Why a volunteer choose an activity that doesn't pay*
- *How the professional persons think to the voluntary service?*
- *There's still a place for voluntary service in our society?*
- *How to increase and make people recognise voluntary service's activities*

*Focus on cross competence*

**Including these recurring:**

- *Training to communicate: speaking to understand each other*
- *Training to communicate: in contact with the other*
- *Communication, welcoming, listening*
- *Fighting and problem solving*
- *Communication in the interpersonal relations*
- *Workshop on the group's dynamics*
- *Helping relationship*
- *How to carry out a meeting*

*The courses managed by the majority of the NGO and others organisations that send volunteers in developing countries instead are enriched in more specific contents depending on the area where the service will be carry out.*

*They could be divides in:*

**Socio-Anthropological Area:**

*Intercultural communication, cultural shock, adopting strategies, cultural stereotypes, contacts between different cultures, anthropology as wealth and tool to face international voluntary service's experience, get in touch with the basics of anthropology, applied anthropology, anthropology of development*

*Socio-economic Area:*

*Evolution of the idea of development, causes of the underdevelopment, imbalance between North and South, historical synthesis of the economic theories of development, issue of the debt of the developing countries*

**Planning Area:**

*Planning issues, stages and elements of a Co-operation project, relations between funds' authorities, idea of partnership, case studies*

**Legislative and bureaucratic Area:**

*Issues about laws and contracts, institutional relationships, rights and duties of the volunteer*

**Aptitude Area:**

*Contractual ability, working in-group, motivational deepening, problem solving, personal aptitudes, role of the volunteers.*

*On top of those main contents, in the case of confessional sending organisations there's the:*

**Religious-ethic Area:**

*Voluntary Service of Christian inspiration. Ethical and motivational issues*

## **4.6 "Having a toolbox". Methodologies, tools and good practices for a right approach to voluntary service**

*The main recurrent approach to training, especially in the case of professional trainer, is the one based on the participatory method. Teamwork, inter-group games, simulation games, discussions and common sessions carry this out. This method stirs up relational dynamics and lean towards the active involvement of the participants.*

*Some interviewed noticed a differentiated use of the training ways depending on the contents and on the issues faced. They described a more frontal approach for the theoretical sections and a more dynamic approach for the others.*

*Very often the remarks where about a general mistrust on frontal methodologies, for any kind of contents. In more than one interviews, the entire training programme is described as a result of a participatory planning, as in general all practices employed in voluntary service are focus on exchange and dialogue.*

*According to this, we can think to the main methodologies for volunteers' training centred on the "cooperative learning", with activities like games, groups' exercises, simulations, role playing and other common sessions. Anyway an important remark as for these elements, is that everything is ruled according to the class and its specificity.*

*The trainer must use in the best way every tool, after having chosen the suitable tool depending on the features of the applicant volunteers.*

*Another common remark is that also the formative needs have to be detected from below, from the classes. In fact every group has its specificity and so methods and contents have to be chosen according to this.*

*In the meaning itself of cooperative learning is clear that learning is focus on the interpersonal relation.*

*Approaching the voluntary service can be important acting in-groups learning and using social competencies through the face to face interaction and the positive interdependence.*

*These are indeed the grounding of voluntary's universe and of its operators.*

*Therefore the focus will be on the learning of cross competence as the communication, the groups' managing, the problem solving and on participatory dynamics that recreates in a virtual way, all the typical situations that the volunteers daily will find.*

## **4.7 Older people learning specifics**

*Is scientifically proved that the cognitive and learning faculties in the third age depends principally on the individual lifestyle, and much less on the age itself. At the same time we can affirm that the learning times are longer for sure, as noticed during mixed-age training experiences.*

*Through the interviews made to the responsible for training classes directed to elders, this thesis have been confirmed; we also tried to let come out their specific difficulties and abilities.*

*According to Francesco Florenzano, the UPTER (Third Age University) president, as well as studios of communication methodologies concerning the elders training, a successful approach must be based on the teacher's attitude. As a matter of fact the aged fell more comfortable when they assume a double role of knowledge receiver and dispenser, so the relation between teacher and students must be an exchange based on the mutual respect and esteem.*

*All the teacher interviewed emphasised the importance of an active didactic instead of a frontal one. Just in a few cases has been noticed a certain reticence during the learning process, probably due to the young age of most of the teachers; a particular case concerns the students who used to be teachers, who find some difficulties to change their stiff role and put themselves in a new perspective, that would be necessary. However in most of the cases the mixed-age classes seemed to have an added value in terms of personal and didactic experience, so it appears as a good chance of enrichment rather than an obstacle. The only one discriminant come out concerning the cultural and educational background, having an important influence upon the information assimilation and elaboration.*

*Regarding the training methods, not relevant problems come out for the elders involving in the activities with younger. As said Barbara Busnelli, trainer for FIVOL (Italian Volunteering Federation), is essential to regard the elders' psychological conditions, that are often more conscious of their limits, sometimes*



more reluctant to face new challenges. Being aware of these things, the right method seems to be the "cases study" to prepare the volunteers, which means to analyse a possible situation and try to find resolution hypothesis. Otherwise is not indicated the practice of "role playing" or any kind of didactic games, that many times they don't feel comfortable with. At the beginning of the training course is essential to let the students' knowledge to come up, through the cases analysis in small groups, using the "co-operative learning" methodologies. In this perspective an emblematic experience comes from Barbara Busnelli, who held some specific training courses directed to aged volunteers. What she did is a conferences session about the "care" concept and meaning, followed by some guided experiences in which the volunteers pretended to be the addresser of the cares, realising in a deeper way how does the helped feel, understanding how to behave to make them feel comfortable. As a result of that experiences, volunteers could deeply understand the importance of respect and the way in which the help is given, trough the direct point of view of who receives the help. All the information collected through the interviews, what mainly resulted is the importance of the teacher's role and his ability to adapt the methods and the tools used for the training during the training itself, never taking for granted the success of their own methods and contents; his task is to grasp what aspects should be deepened and what should be avoided. In the same way he must be able to make the lessons stimulating and active , finding the right way to involve all the presents.

Analysing particularly a foreign language training, we contacted the school "Torre di Babele" of Rome, which offers some courses directed to the aged people. From their experience they noticed, in addiction to the slower learning times, a certain difficulty to pronounce sounds belonging to language different from their own. Is moreover essential to be aware that is possible to meet old students with more or less important hearing problems, so it could make the audio-visual support hard to be used, instead of what is better to use the books, definitely preferred by the aged people. In fact they like much more then the younger to discuss about a subject , being pleased to approach the grammar rules trough the communication and the exchanges with other people. As displayed by the professor De Filippo, to the elders, accustomed to the traditional didactic approach, based on the frontal lessons, according to the teacher discretion.

Therefore the training success depends again on the teachers' ability to manage the different methods and contents according to the elders receptivity showed day by day. Anyway their motivation is always stronger because the will to learn is not functional to the work, but aimed to the satisfaction of the will to learn a language as the expression of a culture.

The results are often much good, especially because the goals set are fruit of a good and deep consciousness of their own abilities and skills as well as limits.

## 5.The Case of Austria

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### 5.1 Volunteering in Austria

On the occasion of the “International Year of Volunteers” (2001), the Austrian Federal Government, by solemnly constituting the Austrian National Committee on Voluntary Work, in this very Year of Volunteers proclaimed by the United Nations, expressed its willingness not only to draw attention to the great importance of voluntary commitment for society but at the same time to give concrete impulses for the improvement of the structural framework for voluntary commitment.

Eight interdisciplinary expert working groups had been installed within the Federal Ministry for Social Security and Generations, and they have **dealt** intensively with the problems and common concerns of non-profit institutions.

The Federal Ministry for Social Security and Generations launched the website [www.freiwilligenweb.at](http://www.freiwilligenweb.at) which is to be enlarged by the numerous activities continuously carried out in the field of voluntary work – in addition to the already existing information and the planned activities to be pursued.

These activities comprise the whole sphere in which voluntary organisations are active.

### 5.2 Legal structural conditions for voluntary work

The re-orientation and modernisation of the legal structural conditions for all those who are involved in voluntary work is characterised by an increased citizen-friendliness and simplifications in the Law relating to Associations. Foundations of associations are speeded up, simplified and rendered cheaper in order to supportively pay tribute to the importance of this commitment on behalf of the State. Adequate recognition and acknowledgement of voluntary services are to be supported through the introduction of a Federal Decoration of Honour for special volunteer merit.

*As the Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs is responsible for the United Nations Volunteers (UNV), it is in close contact with this Organisation and does not only support it financially but also from an intellectual and organisational point of view.*

*Development of a concept for the establishment of a fund for those volunteers who have had an accident during their service, the idea being to provide an automatic insurance with AUVA (General Accident Insurance Company) for volunteers when performing their voluntary tasks.*

## 5.3 Education and training for senior citizens

### Idea and Advantages of the Austrian Studies for Senior Citizens

*When we look at the situation in Austria regarding access for older people to education we can see that access for older people to education has already progressed.*

*This is due to the fact that Austria's universities have always accepted students of all ages - a fact which is unique in Europe. While most other countries are working out educational and university concepts for older people, Austria has been providing universities for all generations for more than two decades. The Austrian universities today are places where not only research and education are emphasized but also the dialogue between the generations. Thus, in Austria there is no such thing as a great lack of intergenerational unity or the loss of contacts with people of all ages, a problem which educational centres for older people are normally confronted with.*

### Legal conditions

*An important precondition which allowed for the whole population to study at university was the introduction of the status of the "non-graduating students". This gave and still gives even those without the necessary matriculation requirements the opportunity to take part in university studies - just out of interest. An international novelty is the acquisition of the matriculation requirements by way of a an exam entitling the candidate to study. People without matriculation requirements can acquire a limited „right to study" directly at Austria's universities. Thus, senior citizens without school-leaving examinations can also pursue regular studies. Since the recommendation of the Rectors' Conference in the 1970s the term „senior students" comprises:*

- women from the age of 40 and*
- men from the age of 45.*

### Counselling and Service for Senior Students

*The access to universities for senior citizens was connected with special counselling for older students. They can not only make use of the regular "counselling service for students" but also a special service for senior students by the Association of University Students which is **run by voluntary senior students** themselves. This service not only counsels students, but also advertises seniors' studies. This is why more and more older people are made aware of this new way of studying.*

Furthermore, the universities offer trans-faculty lectures especially for older people partly in the form of a series of lectures as well as single lectures especially for older students. Older students can take part in general excursions and symposia but also in special exchange programmes with universities abroad. To this end the European Federation of Older Students at the Universities (EFOS) was founded which deals with the seniors' studies models of „open university" at the Universities of Third Age.

#### Statistics regarding Seniors' Studies

According to different studies the interest of older people in education - especially in university education - is constantly rising. Another indication is the constantly increasing number of older students at Austrian universities.

During the winter term 1999/2000 there were 11,493 regular and 2,939 non-graduating senior students at Austrian universities, making a total of 14,432 senior students.

In relation to the total number of students, the proportion of senior students increased during the last 20 years from 1.9% in 1979 to 5.3% today.

#### **Intergenerational Learning**

The concept of senior studies implemented in Austria is based on the advantages of intergenerational learning. It is a rejection of older people's image of being inflexible, and having a limited capacity to learn. Intergenerational learning pursues the aim of putting right the attitude of other age groups.

Studies in this area show that these aims are being achieved in practice at the universities. The results show that middle-aged and young students generally have a positive attitude towards older students.

#### **Senior Students and Voluntary Work**

The fact that further education can bring a new meaning in old age and that it makes people more active is shown in the plans senior students have for their future:

While one in three senior students between 41 and 54 can imagine becoming a volunteer after graduation, in the group of over 55 year-olds it was 49%. Here, the great potential of older people for voluntary work becomes visible, a potential Austria would like to make use of in the „citizens' agencies for young and old". Since 1999 and the International Year of Older Persons, the Ministry of Social Security and Generations has initiated such citizens' agencies for young and old throughout Austria. The voluntary activities organized by these agencies involve all generations and are concrete places of inter-generational learning. While older people pass on their handicraft skills and their historical knowledge to young people, the young show older people how to use a computer and the internet.

*This is an initiative which is definitely one of the bottom-up activities of "eEurope". The decisive point with the initiatives of senior citizens' agencies is, of course, that they start with the requirements and wishes of the new generation of senior citizens, which are activity, a meaningful life and short-term commitments.*

### **ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES**

#### **"Monday Academy":**

**City:** Graz

**Founded:** Winter semester 2001/2002

**Target group:** Younger and older people who do not wish to follow a regular course of studies, as well as all other interested persons

**Aim:** Providing university level knowledge; increasing general education

**Description of Project:** Due to the introduction of a students' fee many (older) people, who are merely extra-curricula listeners, will not enrol any more; therefore the Monday Academy is offered (weekly within the university semester).

**Topic Set-up:** Intellectual – cultural and political – social subjects

**Co-operation:** Austrian Students Association of Graz University

#### **"SiA – Sense in Age:"**

**Founded:** 2000

**Target group:** People in the post professional phase

**Aim:** Further education as orientation help for elderly people

**Description of Project:** Summer and winter academy for post-professional studies; ways of thinking of participants should be examined and life strategies redeveloped: Units are 4 a week from 9am to 5pm.

**Topic Set-up:** Meaning in life and practical know-how; work and leisure time; new technologies; health and personal responsibilities.

#### **Internet Course for Seniors:**

**Founded:** 1998

**Target group:** Women and men who have not had contact with the new medium "internet".

**Aim:** Empowerment of older people.

**Description of Project:** Older people are addressed by way of publicity and general information and the new medium is intelligibly brought closer to them. Through contact with younger people in the course, anxieties are worked off and the desire for new things is awakened.

**Co-operation:** Karl-Franzens University University Graz

## **5.4 Training for Older Volunteers – Best practices**

## **“Citizens’ Centres for Young and Old”**

The Austrian government granted start-up subsidies for the foundation of so-called „Citizens’ Centres for Young and Old”. (“Bürgerbüros”) The Citizens’ Centres for Young and Old act as a “contact point” for voluntary commitment. These new institutions are to strengthen intergenerational solidarity and aim at enabling senior citizens to actively make use of their skills, talents and knowledge as well as to remain active after their professional lives. 20 Citizens’ Centres for Young and Old have already been established. As a contribution to the "International Year of Volunteers 2001,, the Federal Ministry for Social Security and Generations had granted another 10 start-up subsidies to project applicants.

*The staff in these agencies are given training for their work, free of charge for them and paid by the Ministry of Social Security and Generations. This shows publicly that investment in education for older people is an investment for the future. For it is the whole of society which benefits from the use of this knowledge in the voluntary sector.*

### **Curriculum for volunteers’ management in non-profit organization**

*This model project initiated by the Austrian Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection offers a training course for volunteers’ managers.*

*It is being implemented in collaboration between the Federal Institute for Adult Education, the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research (Vienna), as well as the service institution „Volunteers Lower Austria” and the Austrian Red Cross.*

*This pilot project is based on the one hand on the results of the Work Group on „Quality Assurance as well as training and further education for volunteers”.*

*The training course for volunteers’ managers comprises seven modules:*

- Introduction into voluntary work and legal basics*
- Volunteers’ management*
- Planning of voluntary work*
- Recruiting of volunteers*
- Co-operation between professionals and volunteers*
- Recognition for voluntary commitment*
- Empowerment of volunteers for competent collaboration*

**Coordination:** *Federal Institute for Adult Education ("Bundesinstitut für Erwachsenenbildung")*

### **Basic curriculum for the training and further education of volunteers**

*This Curriculum is currently being elaborated in collaboration between the organisations "Promente Infirmis" and "Österreichisches Hilfswerk" (upon proposal by the Austrian Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection).*

*The objective is to provide volunteers with a basic training to facilitate and support their access to voluntary work.*

*The main topics of the curriculum are personal and „technical" development, as well as supporting measures for associations and NGOs to promote collaboration between professionals and volunteers.*

*The field of personal development will focus on identifying and strengthening of one's own skills, motivating factors, improving of personal and social competence, reflection upon one's attitudes as well as recognition and dignity of living together.*

*The „technical training" will focus on the development of skills for voluntary work. Basic and specific knowledge necessary for voluntary work, marketing, accounting, statutes, authorities, questions with regard to liability, project management, basics of labour law.*

*Another training module will treat the acceptance of the „working place" and the adherence to obligations, the integration of volunteers into the organisation as well as the criteria for the fulfillment of the tasks assumed.*