



Legambiente is a leading environmental organisation in Italy formed by 20 regional committees and more than 2000 local groups. Legambiente runs national and international campaigns aimed at reducing traffic and air pollution, pesticides use, or proposing new energy policy, enhancing use of renewable sources, energy efficiency and conservation etc. We have been organising a voluntary campaign for 16 years, promoting summer-camps in many protected areas both in Italy and abroad, with the aim of raising public awareness on environmental issues such as forest-fire or habitat degradation, collecting information on natural resources, promoting green tourism, developing sustainable economy, helping people to be active for the conservation of our natural and cultural heritage. International work camps, promoted by Legambiente, are part of the associations' main campaigns and volunteers' activities contribute to achieve the goals of each campaign.

The common aim of "environmental workcamps" is to improve areas with a distinctive naturalistic and cultural feature and to help solving environmental emergencies of our country. The main activities volunteers carry out are related to paths maintenance or beaches and protected areas cleaning; furthermore, volunteers collaborate in fire prevention or raising awareness on environmental issues. Some work camps are organized within the campaign "Carovana dell Alpi" (Caravan of Alps). This annual campaign, which was first organised in 2002, photographs the alpine system in detail, reports cases of environmental decay and evaluates experiences of sustainable development and ecological re-conversion of the economy. It also proposes the consolidation of the system of nature protected areas. The aims of "Salvalarte", carried out by volunteers, are to awake public opinion, promote the reclaim and restoration of monuments and art works that have been abandoned to decay. Legambiente also gives the opportunity to discover small villages and local traditions of Italy, protected and promoted by "Piccola Grande Italia" (Small Big Italy) campaign, which aims to increase the value of our great heritage – environment, cultural property, local typical products and traditions – cherished in small Italian towns, the irreplaceable defence grounds of the Italian identity. The campaign has already involved 500 towns with less than 5 thousands inhabitants, mountain and provincial communities.

LEGAMBIENTE WORKCAMP

Period: Italian international workcamps last from 10 to 20 days, but mostly 15 days. All participants are expected to arrive on the first and to leave on the last day. Number of participants: between 8 e 20 volunteers.

Age and composition of the group: Minimum age limits is 18 (except teenager camps) and there is no maximum age. More than half of participants are between 21 and 35; 1 out of 10 is older than 40 years. International participants are usually younger; women are the majority (more than 60%). Participants between 15 and 17 years old can join only teenager work camps; parents and children (between 4 and 10 years old) can only join family work camps. People over 50 years old can also take part to "senior volunteers" specific project.

Aims: Voluntary work camps have 2 main objectives: to promote a cultural exchange through a common experience of voluntary service and to realize an environmental project, in order to protect the Italian environment and historic, cultural and artistic heritage.

Daily organization: every work camp can be different according to needs. The way of working can be organized in many different ways and volunteers usually work from 4 to 8 hours. Sometimes it can be necessary to work during weekend or very early in the morning (due to hot weather). Volunteers are requested to be flexible and adaptable to situations. Furthermore it is necessary to react in a positive way to unexpected events or lacks, and to try to be always open-minded and constructive. If not specified, special skills are not required, but participation, enthusiasm and motivation are welcome!

Accommodation: school, public buildings, tents, hostels or dormitory. Beds and mats are usually provided. Usually volunteers sleep in mixed rooms. It never happens to have single or double-bed rooms!!! Shifts for cooking and cleaning are decided during the first day. Every volunteer is responsible for every aspects of the daily life.

Animals are not allowed, because other participant could be allergic or they could interfere with local flora and fauna.

Language: language spoken by volunteers and camp leaders is English.

In international work camp there are maximum 2 volunteers for each country, in order to create and heterogeneous group.

Economy: local hosting association provide food, accommodation and transports needed.

Volunteers are covered by an insurance against accidents and third party liability.

Evaluation: last day of the camp participants and camp leaders meet for a final evaluation.

Access for all: some workcamps are accessible to disadvantaged volunteers.

Legambiente Legality Workcamps

Legambiente has been collaborating with Libera, an Italian association born in 1995 whose aim is to coordinate and involve Italian civil society and public opinion against mafia crimes, since many years. Libera organizes many actions such as the renovation of confiscated mafia territory, legal education in schools and support of local communities. Since 1996, several real estates and fields confiscated to mafia were given to Libera, according to a national law.

In 2001, Legambiente and Libera organised an international youth action in Palermo, and that was a great success either for the associations, the participants and the local hosting community. In 2005, Legambiente, in partnership with Libera, promoted a national and European campaign called "Young people for Legality": this campaign succeeded in raising awareness within local communities and in working on agricultural projects with many local cooperatives.

Intergenerational family camps

In 2003 Legambiente started in Italy promoting experiences where parents with young children could participate together in volunteering. The original idea was not just to allow children in voluntary camps but mainly to create a kind of temporary community where adults and children could share the idea of voluntary activity for protecting nature. Nowadays it is rare that parents and children really do something together: work and school take away a large part of the day, leisure time on week-ends is mainly for recreation such as sport, walks & cinema. Therefore the family conservation experiences have the ambitious conception to offer a different way of communications between the generations.

The group is composed of 15 to 20 participants from different countries, half adults and half children (usually between 5 to 10 years old). It's possible to participate as a whole family or as single parents, and also other relatives (aunts, uncles, grand-parents) can join with their family. This new community share the daily life and the purpose of the voluntary work. Separate bedrooms and common rooms are normally available for mothers, fathers and children. Cooking and cleaning services are provided by participants on rotation. Normally about four-five hours a day are devoted to the practical work for the project. Children can be useful too for easy tasks and they also play and learn by staying in touch with the adults of the project. Then the rest of the time is available for exploring the area with excursions, visits, meeting local people, building deeper friendships with the other participants and for cultural exchange. Language obstacles are normally easily solved by a global communication made of words, gestures and feelings. Parents have the confrontation of different educational approaches and family relationships. Children react very positively to the group dynamics, enjoying the community life and the project ideas. Everybody get to know each other very well, breaking down prejudices and creating the base for a better global understanding.

Special event 2008: one of our camp (Leg-Family 3G) will be reserved to 3 generations families!! It means that some of the families have to be composed also by one or two grandparents. It's a new idea, already experienced by chance in some of our camps. We try now to implement it in our long run experimentation of any possible form of accessible voluntary camps.