

Villacidro: cooperation and solidarity with the European Voluntary Service

A 9 months EVS experience in a Sardinian local community for 2 volunteers

01 February 2019 – 15 September 2019

Background

The City of Villacidro, as local government, manages the responsibilities associated with the city administration. Plans and promotes services for the citizens and the social, cultural and economic development of the town. It offers different kinds of services to the citizens. One of these is the Social Services area. The main objective of the Social and Welfare Services Area is to ensure the entire community an integrated system of services and interventions to promote and carry out activities to ensure that all its citizens a good quality of life, equal opportunities and participation in various aspects, social, cultural, economic and political, of the community. Therefore all the programming and planning of interventions, services, and activities undertaken are aimed at ensuring to all citizens the access to a better quality of life meant not only in terms of basic needs but also to ensure a social "wellness" that allows them to feel as an active part of a community. With this in mind we believe that the added value of a cultural exchange with foreign volunteers can be the stimulus to the strengthening of the participation and active citizenship in the citizens of Villacidro, particularly in young people that will also see the experience of foreign volunteers as a source of direct and unique inspiration: the example offered by their peers who bring a positive cultural diversity. The services provided from the Social Welfare Area are divided according to the type of beneficiaries that are aimed at:

services addressed to all citizens;

services for the elderly;

services for citizens with fewer opportunities;

services for children;

services for young people.

The logistics facilities available are various. In particular, will be involved in the project of European Voluntary Service two structures related to services for young people (Youth Information Center and Educational Services) and one structured linked to services for the elderly (Housing Community).

Context

Villacidro is a town of over 14,000 inhabitants in the province of the Middle Campidano and, along with Sanluri, is its capital. It is located about 50 km from Cagliari and 60 km from Oristano, and is located in the center of Campidano, on the eastern slopes of the mountain range of Monte Linas.

The territory of Villacidro is characterized by large forests, mountain ranges, numerous sources that generate many streams, rivers, waterfalls, mostly seasonal. Site of interest is the Literary Park, created with the aim of promoting the environmental heritage of the territory of Villacidro (as well as that of other participant municipalities), through the works of the writer Giuseppe Dessi.

Prevailing economic activities are trade (in Villacidro has its headquarters the biggest Sardinian owned supermarket retail franchise) agriculture and herding - and, in past times, a thriving mining industry - which, in the recent decades, have been joined by industrial production that marked, not always successfully, the look of the area. Today, thanks largely to the abundance and quality of its agricultural products (particularly oil and fruit), the City of Villacidro is home to numerous small and medium enterprises in the agro-food sector, which may offer prospects for development to the town and to all the surrounding territory as soon as it will be possible to get out of the national and European economic downturn. In fact, despite the current crisis, the social dynamic and the great entrepreneurial spirit and the human capital of the local area, are the best guarantee for economic dynamism that will overcome more quickly than in other Sardinian areas these years of decline.

Thanks to not excessive distance from Cagliari and initiative of its small entrepreneurs, Villacidro doesn't suffer excessively for the depopulation (especially youth) that affects many parts of Sardinia. This means that the number of youth is still significant enough to make youth policies and every initiative in favor of youth in the town a priority of the municipal administration.

Activities

The activities of the Social Service of the City of Villacidro where volunteers can be inserted are different and offer various opportunities for learning and personal development. In particular:

SERVICES FOR YOUTH. Volunteers will gain specific skills related to the ability to plan, activate and update a youth information space. Each volunteer will in fact be involved in the activities of the "Informagiovani of Villacidro" in charge of assessing the demand and supply of labor for the local students; providing information and guidance to the choices of study / education paths; collecting information on scholarships, postgraduate courses and further education, professional courses, study, work and volunteering abroad opportunities. The volunteers will be given the chance to make their proposals on the basis of their specific cultural background, their interests and their skills, in order to enrich the range of initiatives carried out from the Informagiovani, helping to transform it from a "on demand" service to something active with more opportunities for cultural growth and youth participation.

SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY. Volunteers will support the animators of the home for the elderly. The people living in it have different health situations and, above all, have different personal stories. The volunteers will be involved in the activities of collective animation. It offers, to those who want it, the chance to work in laboratories for creating objects with poor materials, to make educational activities of different nature involving small groups of elders. Sometimes we will need to take care of more personal specific needs and therefore to support a senior who may have the need to go for a walk, talk, or simply to be heard.

The hospice has already hosted foreign volunteers and considers essential the contribution of new techniques and new ideas. Proposals that will be compatible with the elder's needs will be well received.

SERVICES FOR KIDS. Volunteers, in agreement with the school management of Villacidro will implement

specific activities of "intercultural encounter" addressed to the students.

They could also plan, in agreement with the team of Social Services, the specific activity of their initiative that will take place, on a weekly or biweekly, at the public library, the multimedia library or in collaboration with the Municipal Music School.

Volunteers will be involved in the activity for a time of about 30 hours a week with the availability of free weekend, except for rare previously agreed exceptions in case of specific events and which will be of course balanced by free weekdays afterwards.

A typical day will normally be scheduled like this:

Monday through Friday

9.30 - Guidance and planning meeting with the staff of Social Services

10:00 - Start of the planned activities

13.00 - Lunch Break

15:00 - Resumption of activities

18:00 - End of activities and leisure time

The EVS Experience will offer particularly useful tools to the strengthening of specific key skills:

Interpersonal, intercultural, social and civic by working closely with the population of Villacidro;

Entrepreneurship due to the need to propose, plan and implement innovative activities not offered by the staff;

Skills of cultural expression through the implementation of cultural projects and / or animation that volunteers will want to include among the activities left to their initiative.

Furthermore, the Associazione Interculturale NUR (which has specific and long experience in teaching L2, strengthened by its partnership with the University for Foreigners of Perugia), will facilitate the reaching of the full levels of language learning that a stay of several months in Italy can offer.

Finally, applying the tools that promote awareness of learning and directly supporting the volunteers since their arrival, it will be possible to allow them to improve their ability to "learn to learn".

PERSONAL INTERCULTURAL PROJECT. Building on the experience of the edition 2015-2017 we have decided to integrate the project with a new activity to help volunteers in reaching a deeper knowledge and understanding of the local culture while, at the same time, reinforcing their competences both concerning the Italian language and the cultural awareness and expression. So the volunteers will be given the necessary equipment (a reflex camera and a voice recorder, when needed) and the necessary technical training to develop their personal project for the discovery and shareability of the Villacidro cultural heritage. Mainly the volunteers will have the chance to plan and realize independently a way to gather information and later share them on the oral history of elder people or on the ways youngsters know and live the town's heritage. The idea is that for every person interviewed there should be a specific place of Villacidro to link to their life and memories and there a QR code will be exposed to link visitor's or other citizen's smartphones to various digital content (photo, audio, video) about that place and the people that have bounds to it.

Logistics

The volunteers will be accommodated in single independent rooms (with bathroom) in the residential

structure of the town that hosts the elder people. The structure, which meets all the regulations regarding accessibility and security, closes at 19.30, but the staff on duty at night will give the volunteers the option to not meet this requirement, or, when possible, a copy of the keys of the structure will be provided. Hosting friends and relatives must be agreed with the management. The volunteers will have a kitchen to manage independently their meals for which they'll have a specific budget. In the structure it is not allowed to bring alcoholic beverages.

The rooms are independent with respect to the area used by the elderly, but it is required to comply with the basic rules of the house.

Volunteers will be provided 2 bicycles for getting around the town that, for its size, makes the bike the ideal medium for travel. For all that regards training or monitoring to be delivered at the NUR Association's offices in Cagliari, public transports costs will be charged to the project. Will be on the volunteers own budget only transport costs related to their personal needs outside of the town.

Training and support

Volunteers will receive extra linguistic support in addition to that provided on-line from Erasmus + to promote their full integration into the community and an active role in the performance of their service. Language training will be based on a constant support guaranteed to volunteer with special meetings held by specialized personnel. The training modules of Italian L2 will ensure a faster learning of the basic elements necessary for effective communication. Eventually, if the volunteers wish, the host organization will support them in taking the available tests sessions for the certification of Italian as a Foreign Language (CELI) held by NUR on behalf of the University for Foreigners of Perugia. Through the partnership between the Associazione NUR and the Town of Villacidro it will be possible to identify the local youth most suitable for the role of "mentor" that will be specifically trained to facilitate of the process of social and cultural inclusion through meetings with specialists with a long experience in the area of youth and by promoting their inclusion in specific SALTO-like Training Courses. Volunteers will however be duly informed of the entire "chain of command" at their disposal to solve any conflicts that might arise during the EVS service. It will also be our care, beyond the EVS training cycle organized by the National Agency, to prepare the volunteers for possible cultural shocks and to support conflict resolution, helping them in setting reasonable expectations and high motivation. Also will be guaranteed the suspension of the activities of the project in order to allow volunteers to participate freely in the EVS training cycle organized by the National Agency. As for the specific more "technical" training required for the project, the volunteers will have the opportunity to acquire, day after day, the necessary skills through the support of the operators of the Social Service of Villacidro and of the specific teams involved in the different services.

Support to the volunteer will be provided along a timetable established in agreement with the mentor who, through regular meetings, will ensure a constant following of all aspects related to the EVS experience, whether directly related to the specific activities planned or regarding the sphere of everyday extraordinary that makes EVS such a particularly rich experience in terms of informal learning. Initially these meetings will be more frequent and then gradually, as the volunteers will find their place in the project and in the local community, their frequency will be reduced. The "mentor" will have a key role in the prevention and management of intercultural crises and in accompanying a volunteer during the different phases of the project, as well as fulfilling the delicate task of trait d'union in the

relationship with the local team as a whole. In addition, the volunteers will have a specific number for emergencies for a constant contact with the coordinating organization and the supervisor. Previous EVS experiences have taught that the best support tool are the networks of relationships that can develop between volunteers and their same age peers of Villacidro and these relationships will be particularly favored in the early stages of the hosting project.