



International Volunteering in the time of Covid-19

How you live a global crisis while you are volunteering in a foreign country

March/April 2020, Faenza (Italy) - The association "**SE.M.I - Seeds For More Interculture**", in cooperation with "**PiGreco Apprendimento**" and "**Informagiovani della Romagna Faentina - Cooperativa Libra**" hosts six international volunteers in Faenza from September/November 2019 for 12 months, implementing three different projects with the European Solidarity Corps program: "**Equal in Creativity**", "**Everybody is Learning**" and "**Solidarity Youth**".

The "**European Solidarity Corps**" (also known as **ESC**) is a program of the European Union which finances youth mobility, and in this specific case youth mobility for international long term volunteering (more info here: https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en)

In the end of February 2020, the Coronavirus and the influence that causes, Covid-19, struck Italy and suspended most of the events and activities, including ESC normal activities.

Four of the six international volunteers living in Faenza (from Spain, Lithuania, Finland, Estonia and Greece) have decided to stay in Italy, due to the difficulty of travelling these days, and as every person on the Italian territory, they have to stay inside their houses.

The first week of the emergency, when the volunteering activities were cancelled, things were uncertain and there was no further information about the duration of this difficult period.

The following weeks, before and during the lockdown, the organizations involved in the ESC projects provided a variety of activities to the volunteers that they could do from home.

The smart-working concept was still in process in the rest of the country, but it shortly became a reality. The "smart-activities" are related to communication (social media, communication reports, blogging etc.), preparation of activities to implement after the lockdown in various schools and festivals, improvement of Italian language skills and so on.

Even though it is a difficult period, the feelings of the volunteers keep changing and also the activities that the associations assign them. Here are some thoughts.

Project *Equal in Creativity*: associazionesemi.org

Project *Everybody is Learning*: pigrecoineurope.wordpress.com

Project *Solidarity Youth*: unitedyouthfaenza.home.blog



“We have found ourselves in our best essence: enjoying our loneliness and calmness even though we really miss our activities with the kids. About our smart work, what we have done it’s to prepare the activities we might do (if the emergency ends soon) during the summer.”

PiGreco Volunteers, Project **“Everybody is Learning”**

“We have courage over fear, coffee in a mug and a way to escape the close quarters through artistic projects that we can implement after this difficult period.”

Informagiovani Volunteers, Project **“Solidarity Youth”**

“During the period of the quarantine we’re a bit bored sometimes, it’s hard to stay inside all the time, but at least we can study Italian, write international projects and do blogging from home.”

SE.M.I Volunteers, Project **“Equal in Creativity”**

SE.M.I association is also cooperating with a variety of associations around Europe and sends Italian Volunteers to other European Countries. One organization that is having a close collaboration with SE.M.I during this situation is **“You In Europe”** based in Greece. In particular, the volunteers hosted in Faenza are working closely with volunteers in Greece and SE.M.I provided them too with plenty of activities to do from home.

“In this tragic moment we are all living all over the world, and during this quarantine, the collaboration with SE.M.I. organisation and the smart working we started is giving me the chance to realise the beauty of human connection in every circumstance. I am currently living and volunteering in Greece, but thanks to social media and technology I have been able to work with the Italian organisation and create original and interesting projects.”

Federica Lorenzin, **“You In Europe”**

On this note we wish to remember that as European citizens we are United in diversity and that international volunteering opportunities are enriching us as people but also as communities.

Hoping that the emergency is ending soon, we’ll keep smart-working across Europe, to build a more inclusive society and offering development opportunities to our youth.

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MORE ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS

“**SE.M.I. – Seeds for More Interculture APS**” is an association based in Faenza (RA), Italy. SE.M.I. aims to provide youngsters with the possibility to live in a rich intercultural and creative environment where to exchange opinions and develop new ideas. In order to reach these goals the association organizes local and international, cultural and intercultural activities, with a focus on creativity, intercultural dialogue, self-development and communication.

Website: <https://associazionesemi.org/>

“**PiGreco Apprendimento APS**” is a study-support center funded to provide youngsters (in particular young people with learning difficulties) with educational and motivational support during their studies. PiGreco center is a place where youngsters with and without specific learning disorders can meet and cooperate in their learning process and improve their studying skills.

Website: <https://www.pigrecoapprendimento.it/>

The “**Youth Information Center**” of Romagna Faentina, managed by “**Cooperativa Libra**”, is a totally free office where young people can go to receive advice on their curriculum vitae, university career or high school to choose from, volunteer opportunities(in Italy and abroad), training and education opportunities.

Website: <http://www.informagiovanifaenza.it/>

“**You in Europe**” is a youth association based in Greece that develops programs and initiatives to motivate young people and adults to participate in learning activities, support people with special needs in gaining access to education and integrate better in society, and help volunteers to gain knowledge, help the community and obtain new skills.

Website: <https://youineurope.gr/>

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