

**Society of St Vincent de Paul / International Council General  
« Mobility » project / CGI / European Union Collaboration.  
Project meeting – Paris, 20-22 November 2008**

→ Document intended for all participants and Contact Persons for the project

**Minutes of meeting**

- A. General aims of “Golden Years - Mobility” (reminder)
- B. Target audience
- C. Participating countries for the project / Present at meeting
- D. General report

**A. GENERAL AIMS (Reminder)**

Setting up an intra-European (European Community) exchange scheme for people of 50 years and over (known as the « golden years »), for formation, exchange of experience, particular actions, promoting mobility of « seniors » looking for formation through the European Union.

The project is largely subsidised by the European Union for whom it is a project that can also be served as a reference and landmark for the same kind of action in future.

Comment: *our responsibility therefore goes way beyond this simple project!*

**B. Target audience**

This is very **specific**, and is a condition *sine qua non* of the European aid:

- Volunteers of 50+ (called the « golden years », in terms of their availability and life experience).
- The purpose is to encourage them to go outside their own country, with the desire for formation, gaining reference points for their work as volunteers or new projects and improving what they do at home.
- They may or may not be Vincentians- we are being asked to « cast the net wide ». Other bodies (NGOs) should be invited to join us so that the experiences we gain can benefit as many « senior volunteers » as possible.
- The two key words on which the European financial support depends are therefore: **MOBILITY** for **SENIOR Volunteers** (50 years plus).

**C. Participants**

All countries in the European community which have a Vincentian presence were invited to participate, each appointing a « Contact Person » who would be the « national » linchpin and « international » relay for the 3 years the project will run (until November 2010).

**Annex 1** to this report gives a list of participating countries and the contact details of the Contact Persons.

The following list summarises the countries that take part in the Mobility project. (Those present at the meeting in Paris, on 20, 21 and 22 November 2008 are in bold).

**Europe Centre North**

Zone 1: **England and Wales, Scotland, Ireland.**

Zone 2: Germany, **Austria**, Netherlands, South Tyrol.

Zone 3: **Hungary**, Lithuania, Poland, **Slovak Republic**, Czech Republic, **Romania**.

#### Europe Centre Mediterranean

Zone 4: **Belgium**, **Spain**, France, Gibraltar, **Italy**, Luxembourg, **Malta**, Portugal, Slovenia.

Apart from the representatives of these countries, the following people were also present at the meeting:

- 2 representatives from the European Union (Ms **A. Poliart** and Mr **D. Gerhardt**)
- The Territorial Vice President of Europe Centre Mediterranean **Marie-Françoise Salesiani-Payet** and the Coordinator **Carla Sandroni**
- The CGI correspondent for Eastern European countries (**Marie-Noëlle Desbrosses**)
- A representative of Euregio, a special international Conference located at the so-called «3 borders» zone (Belgium, Netherlands, Germany), represented by Mr **Robert Thonon** (Belgium) as well as Mr Ollivier Bethoux who reported on a successful twinning between a Conference in France and one in Romania
- External contributors, very high-level speakers (Messrs. **Jean Cherville**, **Nicolas and Matthieu Brejon de Lavergnée**, **David Williams**)
- Father **Yvon Laroche**, Spiritual adviser to the CGI (observer)
- And, last but not least, CG Board members, the President General (**José-Ramon Diaz-Torremocha**), and the International Vice-President for structure, **Brian O'Reilly**, who chaired the discussions.
- The CGI team, including **Marina Kadner-Ricci**, who initiated the project with the European Union.

34 people therefore met for this first working meeting.

#### **D. REPORT of work**

The meeting began with a quiproquo, happily soon dealt with : the importance of the conditions required by the European Community (« **Mobility** » and « **Seniors** ») had not been given their true value by most of the national contributors, who mostly produced multiple, and really very interesting accounts of their countries, but without specifically addressing the « Criteria for EU funding ». This discrepancy was overcome by the second day, and agreement was established between national projects and EU criteria. The chairman of the discussions (Brian O'Reilly) and Marina Kadner-Ricci firmly insisted that our projects are fully in accordance with the European Union's criteria for financial help.

Once the « national » presentations had been made, reporting on about fifty potential projects between our various countries, which have already inspired some initial cooperative projects, we came to the stage of developing a working method for the coming years. This "working structure" will be consolidated in real time by exchanges via Internet, among contact-persons and the CGI. It should lead to the implementation of initial international exchange trips as of Spring 2009.

## A 2-level work-structure:

1. For applicants for international exchanges:  
Exchanges and formation trips across European countries for « **senior** » **volunteers**, SSVP members or not, including other NGOs if interested.
2. For Contact Persons and the CGI team  
Regular contact among the « **Contact Persons** » appointed by each country, and the **CGI team**.

Each level has been structured separately to make it easier to understand and work with later.

### LEVEL 1:

#### EXCHANGES AND FORMATION TRIPS

#### FOR CANDIDATES PROPOSED BY THE VARIOUS COUNTRIES ON SPECIFIC PROJECTS.

1. Each member country of the project SUGGESTS one or more formation subject(s) (topics of visits in their own country), that could interest other member countries via the CGI which will distribute them to the other members countries. A database of information on activities of each country has been established and needs to be kept updated with additional information from the countries. In **annexe 2**, the current status of the database.
2. National Councils, helped by their Contact Person, choose and suggest applicants based on their interest in a particular project suggested and/or their involvement in a similar, existing project in their own country. At the same time, individual volunteers or groups can submit their own interest in taking part in an exchange trip. They must contact their national Contact Person, their National Council or the CGI who will put them in touch with their Contact Person. Applicants do not necessarily have to be Vincentians and belong to the SSVP to participate in this project. (There is a spirit of openness to others, to encourage extension of existing activities on behalf of a larger number of deprived people). An « *application form* », describing the applicant's reasons (and how they intend to make concrete use of the formation they receive) should ensure that these trips are not turned into « tourist travel ». **In annexe 3, the application form.**
3. After the general recommendation by the Contact Person, a Selection Committee at the CGI has to decide on allocating the grant for the request.
4. Once this is agreed, the operation itself must be organised:
  - (a) Preliminary contacts between CGI and the Contact Person of the two countries involved. The participants themselves must have the most active part.
  - (b) Preparation and organisation of the trip by the Contact Person of the organising country, assisted by the National Council. (Find volunteers who can serve as interpreters!)
  - (c) 3 types of journey are presently recommended (depending on numbers of participants and their interests):
    - (1) 3 to 5 people, for 3 to 4 days (« **study trips** »)
    - (2) 1 or 2 people (« **senior experts** » ) for a longer period (1 to 4 weeks) →  
This will then involve more "in-depth" work

- (3) More than 5 people (up to 30) for « **bus-tours** » (*a better name for this must be found, to avoid confusion with the "tourist" idea!*):
- International visits of a larger number of volunteers, near to each other and possibly of several locations
  - Shorter period (1 to 2 days)
  - Basically « practical » visits (field trips)
  - Finding out what is being done « elsewhere » so that it can be copied, entirely or partly, back home.
  - Getting around by bus (or other fairly easy means of travel).
5. The European Union and the Council General fund accommodation and travel, after agreeing on the project submitted, within the budget allocated to the project.
  6. The project is limited only by the funds available! Keeping costs down by staying with hosts (local SVP members) or in convents or modest hotels, cheaper means of transport, etc., will therefore mean that the number of exchanges and/or number of potential participants can be increased accordingly. Each organising country should bear this in mind!
  7. Those taking part from each country must submit a report on their trip to their national Contact Person on their return home (quickly, in order to allow efficient and speedy sharing of information). National Councils will of course be informed of the content of these reports.
  8. Even more important is that they are asked to describe, as far as possible, how they intend to use what they have gained from their experience, in precise projects that they will implement. We will therefore be able to make the best possible use of the efforts put into each formation trip. As we have noted, and it should be emphasised again, these are not just « tourist » trips!
  9. The National Council of each participant comments on these reports, thus endorsing the « new » projects initiated in its own area. The Contact Person then passes the report to the CGI so that the results can be relayed to all the countries belonging to this project.
  10. Of course, the report issued by the country ORGANISING the trip will cover its effects more comprehensively. Its National Council will also receive all the views of the « travellers » who took part in the formation process (via the CGI), so that the effects of its organisation work can be properly evaluated.
  11. We recommend that non-Vincentians and members of other organisations should be asked to join trips, not just because that will enable greater mutual understanding between the SSVP and other NGOs, but also because it could encourage non-Vincentians to join us (even though this is not the main aim of the project). The SSVP will always come out of this a winner, whichever way the exchanges flow!
  12. **To remind ourselves of the aims: encouraging « senior volunteers » in the desire to travel « around Europe », for formation and to put this formation into effect in their own country.**

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**LEVEL 2:**  
**BETWEEN CONTACT PERSONS and CGI**  
**FOR REVIEWING THE VARIOUS PROJECTS**

1. It is vital to specify clearly the work of the Contact Person:
  - Being the « relay » for their National Council with the CGI for everything relating to the Mobility project and its applications (and vice versa!)
  - Use all means of communications to ensure the volunteers, Conferences and Councils know of the “Mobility Project” and its opportunities.
  - Helping the National Council to select candidates for each formation trip, for the project chosen (interest in the suggested topic, previous involvement in an identical project, age criterion, new projects that could arise from this trip, etc.).
  - Encourage individuals or groups of volunteers to apply for an international exchange.
  - Evaluate the application for each candidate picked by the National Council, before sending it to the CGI.
  - Preparing the chosen candidate for the journey (information, aims, particular intentions, etc.).
  - Being the link to other Contact Persons (mainly that of the organising country) to help set up each trip.
  - When the travellers come back, collecting their individual reports as quickly as possible to send on to the National Council and CGI.
  - Publicising by all possible media (newspapers or internal newsletters, e-mail, etc.) the practical results from each trip organised for the Mobility project (based on the CGI’s results).
  - Attending formation /information meetings, organised by the CGI.
  - Staying in touch (via Internet or other means) with other Contact Persons and the CGI throughout the operation.
  - And being the « pin point » for the trips organised in their own country.
  
2. This workload explains why the Contact Person will not go on every journey organised for the Mobility project (maybe not even go on any journey) but it means there must be excellent coordination among all Contact Persons.
  
3. There should be regular meetings of all Contact Persons and the CGI team, to:
  - Check on progress of on-going projects
  - Find immediate solutions to any problems
  - Get things «back on track» if the project slips at all with respect to EU requirements.
  - Stay in touch «face to face», other than just by Internet, letter or telephone.

Possibly these meetings could take place in a different country each time, for example in a country where an exchange is still to be completed, in order to grasp the local conditions, problems on the ground, as well as to allow some of the Contact Persons to introduce their country, its culture and food to the other Contact Persons.

Under these conditions, it is vital to keep the costs of these Contact Person meetings as low as possible.

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## **CONCLUSIONS**

The CGI will keep National Councils and their Contact Persons informed, as far as possible in real time. The content of the meeting on 20, 21 and 22 November in Paris, has been distributed in the meeting folders to each participant received and can also be sent by e-mail on request.

In return, the CGI expects to receive the maximum amount of information regarding the preparation and later on the effective outcomes of this operation (hence the importance of full, clear reports on results and identification of participants).

A database has been designed to catalogue information on national activities. Each country is asked to check the content and send in any additional information.

National Councils are asked to support and assist their Contact Person as much as possible in carrying out this project, for the benefice of all its participants, in a Vincentian spirit of exchange and mutual understanding.

The CGI and its « Mobility » team thank all those involved in this project, for their energy and enthusiasm in ensuring its success.

A final word of command from Brian O'Reilly, (who chaired the meeting):

**BE INVENTIVE!**

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### Annexes:

- 1. List of national Contact Persons**
- 2. Database of national activities**
- 3. Application form for exchange activities**

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*By CGI with considerable help from Michel Bouly/ Belgium.*