

Things are moving in Europe: “Mobility” project



A year and a half ago, the European Union (EU) funded “Mobility project” was set up to encourage cross-border mobility and international cooperation among volunteers aged 50 years and over within the EU, in order to form an exchange network for best practice among volunteers, develop formation and encourage new initiatives through international exchanges.

After the necessary months of work on organisation and structure, the Project was launched, and the first study visits took place recently, 5 just in May alone. So for example, a pair of ‘senior’ Belgian Vincentians, and a pair of Hungarian volunteers visited Marina di Massa in Italy from 30 April to 4 May for a ‘Family Conferences’ meeting. The purpose of this meeting, open to Vincentians and to friends who were not part of the SVP, was to exchange general experience of their voluntary work, and to find out about the idea of Family Conferences, introduced by the Italian SVP.

The idea for these Family Conferences came from the observation that young married couples with small children, who want to volunteer, cannot play a full part in the life of normal Conferences. In response, Italian Vincentians have formed a new type of Conference, which organises its time around the needs of young families, where the children experience the work of the Conference along with their parents, such as making home visits. In these Conferences, volunteers over 50 years of age have a very important part to play as guides, passing on their experience of life and of volunteering. As grandparent figures, they find willing listeners for their advice...



Some participants at the Marina di Massa meetings

So these four ‘older’ Vincentians travelled to Italy to find out if and how they can adapt this notion within their own countries, to develop their voluntary work in their community. This is the main purpose of the “Mobility Project”!

Further study visits for sharing the knowledge of volunteers in other countries are already under way or being planned:

- Romania (Bosca) => Austria (Graz): formation in best practice of Austrian Vincentians, to develop a network for future cooperation
- Romania (Resita) => Hungary (Miskolc): Exchanging experience about the help that older volunteers can give to children with disabilities.
- Northern Ireland (Belfast) – France (Paris): Organisation of the work of older volunteers at regional level
- England (Oxford) => Romania (Campulung Muscel): Study visit for future cooperation with centres for the deaf.



There are still endless possibilities for volunteers, alone or in groups to take part in exchange visits through the Mobility Project! Any topic relevant to volunteer work, chosen by the volunteers themselves, can be included. Accommodation and transport costs may be reimbursed, within limits, with EU funding.

Please ask for further information from Marie Grosjean, responsible for the Mobility Project with the CGI: marie.grosjean@ozanet.org. Contact details for those organising the visits for the countries involved in the Project are also on

our website www.ssvpglobal.org.

Personal account...

Michel Bouly, a Belgian Vincentian aged sixty, told us what he remembers of his 'study visit' with the Mobility project: *"From the days we spent with Italian families belonging to 'Family Conferences', we will remember the quality of the talks, one on a comparison between the way of life of Muslim and Christian families, a very thorough study of inter-family relationships and the feelings they generate, and finally an exchange of experiences among the participants, each describing their area of action and the methods used.*



This 'Mobility' experience will help us to realise how important it is to find out about each other, through our differences or our similarities as "Europeans", as well as to gain new experience to take home to our own country...

The principle of 'Family Conferences', where the whole family, parents and children, are involved in voluntary work, is one which we have only just begun to discover in Belgium. Our experience in Marina di Massa will certainly encourage us to develop it back home, having seen the results it brings."

From CGI...

8-12 June 2009: international meetings in Salamanca

The statutory annual meeting of the two main legal bodies of the International Confederation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul - the International Executive Committee (CEI) and the Permanent Section, took place in the Mother House of the Lazarist Fathers, in Salamanca, Spain, from 8 to 12 June 2009. It was also an opportunity for bringing together two other institutions that will be very important for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in future: the 'Concordat' countries, and the newborn Bailly-Lallier Foundation. A 'restricted' meeting of the Territorial Technical Commission also took place, as well as a plenary meeting of the International Office.



The Lazarist Spirituality Centre, Salamanca

A brief reminder about each of these bodies of the CGI...

The Office (8 to 12 June)

The Office meets at least three times a year especially at the opening of each CEI meeting and is chaired by the President General. It is responsible for advising on any problems and collaborating in development of strategies for implementing decisions of the Council General Assemblies, and CEI recommendations, designing strategies to propose to them.



Some members of the Office, Paris, Feb. 09

Its members include the Vice-President General, Michael Thio (Singapore), the Secretary General, Erich Schmitz (Germany), the Treasurer General, Ian McTurk (Scotland), Assistant Vice-Presidents General for Structure, Brian O'Reilly (Ireland), and for Formation, Jean Cherville (France) as well as the International Spiritual Adviser, Father Yvon Laroche rsv (Canada); the International Youth Coordinator, Julien Spiewak (France), the President of the Africa Commission, John Meahan (Australia), the Financial Adviser, Syd Tutton (Australia) and the Strategic Plan officer, Rigoberto del Río (Peru).

The Permanent section (9 and 10 June)

Its task is to oversee the day-to-day activity of the Society around the world to deliver the best international service to the poor. In particular it votes on the budget of the Council General, confirms elections of new Presidents of Superior and Assimilated Councils as well as newly instituted Councils and Aggregations of Conferences, and hears the reports of Territorial Vice Presidents, Presidents of Special Commissions and missioned members. It also ratifies the decisions of the Territorial Technical Commission.

The CEI (11 June)

Its mission is to coordinate the Society's international strategy between meetings of the General Assembly (every 6 years), ensuring it respects the latter's requirements, and to advise the President General in managing Conferences and Councils around the world. It consists of Presidents of Superior or Assimilated Councils of countries having more than 1000 Conferences (England & Wales, Australia, Brazil, United States, India, Ireland, Italy, Zambia) and 5 further countries appointed for 2 years (Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Scotland, DR Congo) and members of the Office. The Territorial Vice-Presidents, presidents of International Commissions, members given special missions by the President General and the Spiritual Adviser are invited without voting rights.



The CEI meeting in Paris

Technical territorial commission

The 'CTT' is mainly responsible for studying requests for financial help from Vincentian countries, for development projects, disaster relief or rehabilitation after disasters. It is chaired by the Vice-President General, and has 4 members of the Office and volunteers and employees from Council General who provide the link with the countries and Structure members, to ensure effective handling and reliable follow-up to these applications.



Bailly –Lallier Foundation (9 June)

The newly-formed Bailly-Lallier Foundation is an ambitious project for offering formation, research and discussion to Vincentians from all over the world. In Salamanca, the members of the Foundation Study Group, responsible for establishing the principles, considered the various options for training courses, funding and the legal status of the Foundation.

The Concordat (9 June)

Formed at the CEI meeting in June 2008, the ‘Concordat’ brings together the main countries contributing to the functioning of the Council General, involved in finding a solution to the chronic financial problems of the CGI by increasing their own contributions, already often very high, as well as mobilising Councils around the world to follow their example. The representatives of this group met in the morning on Tuesday 9 June, at the same time as the Bailly-Lallier Foundation, to produce a report on the first year, and to work on future plans.

Help us to support the Society!

You can send your donations by cheque to the Confederation’s Offices

Or by bank transfer to:

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2 Bd Raspail 75007 Paris, France

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In the name of: Confédération Internationale - Société de St Vincent de Paul

Stop press...

United Nations, New York

The International Confederation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, working towards greater international recognition by the global community, this year submitted its application for membership of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), to obtain its official, consultative status as a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO). Our application was submitted to the annual NGO committee meeting, held from 18 to 27 May 2009.

We are not worried that the Society’s application was not accepted this time: it often takes several months for applications to be accepted, and the Council General will continue the work, with the most valuable help of Mr. Vincent Reilly, a New York Vincentian (whom we thank most warmly, in passing!).... we will of course keep you informed of our progress!

How many Conferences are there in the world?

48,000? 50,000? More? Sadly, it is difficult to say! The importance of reliable statistics for an organisation of our size goes without saying...so Council General is trying hard to obtain a full list from every Vincentian country of all the active Conferences in its territory. If you are a member of a Superior or Assimilated Council that has not yet sent in this list, there is still time! We are relying on you!