



All About AFS / Intercultura

AFS / Intercultura is an international, voluntary, non-governmental, non-profit organization that provides intercultural learning opportunities to help people develop the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to create a more just and peaceful world.

- Partner organizations in more than 60 countries
- Exchanges between 90 countries
- International exchange since 1919
- More than 30,000 active volunteers and 100,000 supporters around the world
- Over 11,000 students sent per year
- More than 400,000 program alumni

History

The American Field Service (AFS) began during World War I, when 2,500 Americans volunteered to drive ambulances in France and the Balkans.

In World War II, another 2,200 young men volunteered as AFS ambulance drivers in Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, India and Burma. During the two wars, AFS drivers transported more than 1.2 million wounded. At the end of World War II, AFS drivers assisted with the medical evacuation of 11,000 survivors of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

Under the leadership of Stephen Galatti, the drivers organized the first AFS secondary school exchanges in 1947 to build international understanding and peace through the contact of ordinary citizens.

AFS / Intercultura Today

The worldwide network consists of more than 50 partner organizations in 50 countries around the globe, governed by volunteer boards and run by volunteers who connect to their community to place high school students, community service participants, and teachers, with host families, schools, and community service organizations.

As AFS programs have become multi-national, the organization's structure has evolved to reflect this reality. The AFS organization in most countries is now a registered not-for-profit entity that we call a Partner. Each AFS Partner has its own volunteer board of directors with responsibility for the staff, budget and programs in its territory. The AFS International office in New York provides overall leadership and coordination, while offering a number of core services but AFS program operations are managed by Partners. This management structure successfully balances the independent yet interdependent nature of AFS organizations.

Future World Leaders and AFS

Among AFS alumni are more than 100 Ambassadors and Consuls General as well as thousands of executive leaders in businesses, government and organizations across the globe. Many will attest that their AFS experience gave them an extraordinary opportunity for growth and the development of leadership skills that helped them get to where they are today.

AFS Program Monitoring and Quality Assurance

AFS conducts a worldwide mandatory Customer Service Evaluation each year. AFS receives evaluations from thousands of its participants, host families, sending families, schools and community programs based on their experiences and uses the results for continuous quality improvement. Partners use these results to improve program growth with quality and strengthen the overall educational impact.

AFS gets an “A”: The 2005 Customer Service Evaluation results show that students and their families had a 90% overall satisfaction rating.

Intesa Sanpaolo and AFS / Intercultura : our programme

Starting in 2005, following a fortunate cooperation on a **corporate scholarship programme** with the Italian headquarter of Intesa Sanpaolo for Italian students abroad, the Divisione Estero of the Bank itself agreed on a programme for foreign students to Italy.

The programme consists in a school year and family stay in Italy for sons and daughters of employees (or for the students of the local schools) of the Banks in Bosnia, Croatia, Hungary, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia. The age range is 15 – 17 .

On September 6th the first group of 13 students has arrived in Italy.

Each applicant has undergone a selection in the country of origin in order for the partner organization to identify the most suitable ones. The selected students have been assigned to an Italian family and considered a member for the full year (10 months, from September to July). They are attending an Italian high school.

During their stay a series of planned meetings are organized so that it is possible to monitor the impact of the stay and the changes and to support who ever is in need. Each student is assigned a tutor.

For the next school year (2008/2009) Intercultura and Intesa Sanpaolo wish to enlarge numbers of students and diversify countries of origin of the students and countries of destination (Italy, most northern European countries, China, Turkey, USA)

SOMETHING ABOUT ITALY

The land and the climate: Italy is shaped like a boot: the "heel" and some coastal areas are fairly low in elevation but the country is generally mountainous: the Italian Alps mountains lie along the northern border and the Apennines form a spine down the peninsula. The main islands of Sicily and Sardinia are also rocky or mountainous. The Po river basin in the north holds some of Italy's richest farmland and most heavy industry: Agriculture areas in the south are subject to droughts. The climate is generally temperate however since the country is long and narrow it can vary a lot between the North and the South: this of course has an effect on the differences in the lifestyle of the population of these regions.

The population and the language: The population in Italy is of 58.5 million and is growing at 0.2 percent annually. Most people are ethnic Italians, there also are small groups of Germans and French as well as Slovenians and Albanians. Italian is the official language, although there are different dialects from city to city. There are significant French and German speaking minorities as well as Ladin speakers in south Tyrol and Slovene speakers close to the Yugoslavian border.

Some history : Italy's early history has greatly influenced the Western civilization. Before the Romans became prominent, Greek civilization dominated the south and the Etruscan culture flourished in Central Italy between the 8th and 2nd century BC. Rome became a major power after 400 BC and expanded throughout the Mediterranean area. The Roman Empire's impact has significantly influenced modern legal, social, political and military structures throughout the Western regions. Since the fall of the Roman Empire (4th century AD) until 1870 Italy has been divided and under various dominations (French, Spanish, Austrian, German). The only dynasty which spans the entire history of the country is the Church which has been rich and powerful. Mainly because of the Church, Italy has become the country of arts, music, culture and architectural revolutions reaching its magnificence during the Renaissance in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. After the unification, from 1870 to 1946 Italy was governed by the monarchy through a parliament and from 1922 to 1943 was a fascist dictatorship under Mussolini. At the end of the World War II the fascists were overthrown and Italy supported the Allies. A republic was established with elections in 1946.

Modern times: Today Italy's government has a president, a prime minister, a bicameral legislature and a Council of Ministers. The prime minister and the Council of Ministers govern the nation. The country is divided in twenty regions some of which would like to have more autonomy from the central government.

The people: Italians are often described as warm and friendly people. Strong, traditional ties bind their families together and family association is of great importance. Young people tend to live at home for quite a long time and often leave their families only when they get married. Italian families, especially in the cities, generally live in apartments. The father generally works and spends many hours away from home: he usually helps very little with domestic chores although this kind of behavior is changing especially among young couples. Today mothers usually work too in which case family duties are more divided among the family members. There are still many housewives: in any case the Italian *mamma* remains a central figure in the family conduction and organization. Children mostly follow the family life: they spend a good deal of time studying and practicing some sport activities during the week. Special activities and going out (especially in the evening) are reserved for week-ends. For recreation Italians go to movies, theatre, concerts, sport events, beach and country. Soccer is the most popular sport but other sports are also well known.

The majority of the Italians are Roman Catholic although religious devotion is often neglected. Lots of the Italian celebrations are Catholic holidays and there are also some national holidays as Liberation Day, Labour Day, Anniversary of the Republic. Celebrations are often spent with the family relatives and friends, in large gatherings for the day. In these occasions large, traditional meals are prepared.

Food is something important in Italy: people sit around the table for a long time compared to other's standards and consider the meal an occasion to socialize, talk, meet with friends or often with clients to work out business. The normal family routine includes three meals: a light breakfast (coffee or milk or both with cookies), a lunch with pasta, meat or fish, vegetables and fruit, a light dinner (a soup, cheese or eggs and vegetables). Lunch has been the main meal for long time and probably still is in families where the mother is a housewife.

Of course attitudes and traditions can vary a lot from region to region. Italians in the warm South enjoy a more leisurely life and take their time to accomplish business. In contrast those of the industrialized Northern Italy feel more pressured and view time as something not to be wasted. This is one of the most perceptible differences in Italy: there are many prejudices which still exist today and cause tensions between the people of these regions. There are many reasons which drove to this, historical, religious, economical.

This information comes from INTERCULTURA's orientation material and from CULTURGRAM's for the '90s, "Italy" edited by the Brigham Young University, David M. Kennedy Center for International studies - Provo, UT. (USA)

DESCRIPTION OF THE ITALIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Education is compulsory in Italy until the age of 14 (elementary school and middle school for a total of 8 years). After five years of elementary school and three years of middle school (scuola media) an Italian student may choose among a variety of secondary schools, the most common of which are:

LICEO CLASSICO: stressing humanities (Latin and Greek are compulsory subjects) although scientific subjects are also taught, leading to a diploma that allows students to gain access to all university courses. It is a five year course. The Liceo classico is a very, very demanding school.

Subjects: Italian Literature, Latin, Greek, History, Geography, Biology, Maths, Physics, Religion, History of Art, Philosophy, one foreign language.

LICEO SCIENTIFICO: stressing scientific subjects although providing a general education in humanities and languages. The diploma allows students to gain access to all university courses. It is a five year course.

Subjects: Sciences, Maths, Chemistry, Biology, Astronomy, Physics, Geography Italian literature, one Foreign Language, Art, History of Art, Philosophy, Latin, History,

LICEO ARTISTICO: a four year course where art is taught. It gives admission to the school of architecture and to the various academies of fine arts. **Subjects:** Decorative Drawing, Stil Life Drawing, Use of different perspective Drawing, Maths, Sciences.

LICEO LINGUISTICO : stressing the study of languages and humanities providing a good general education. The diploma allows students to gain access to university. A five year course **Subjects** Italian, History, History of Art, Philosophy, Three foreign languages, Maths, Physics, Chemistry, Latin, Language laboratory work.

ISTITUTO TECNICO PER GEOMETRI: a professional school of five years duration, preparing students for a career as land surveyors or as specialists at intermediate levels in the construction business.

ISTITUTO TECNICO COMMERCIALE: a professional school of five years duration, preparing students for a career in accounting, banking, etc.

OTHER TYPES OF ISTITUTO TECNICO: all of five years duration, preparing students in different technical fields (agriculture, tourism, chemical industry, etc.).

The final diploma for all types of technical schools allows students to gain access to university.

ISTITUTIO TECNICO PEDAGOGICO : a five year course, for the preparation of elementary school teachers. It gives access to some university courses. Subjects Italian Literature, Latin, History of Art, Technical Drawing, History, Geography, Sciences, Maths, one foreign Language, Philosophy, Psychology

Almost all INTERCULTURA /AFS students come from state schools although there are many private schools .

The percentage of students who go on to secondary school after the age of 14 is about 80%. The percentage of students who go on to university after completing secondary school is around 50%.

The grading system:

9/10 Outstanding	7/8 Very good,
6 Good	5 Fair/Average
4 Poor	3/4 Failing

THE MAJORITY OF STUDENTS WILL RECEIVE GRADE 6 FOR ACCEPTABLE OR GOOD WORK OVER THE YEAR.

GRADES OF 8, 9 OR 10, ESPECIALLY IN LICEO TYPE HIGH SCHOOLS ARE TO BE CONSIDERED UNUSUAL.

The school year runs from mid September to mid June with two weeks off at Christmas and one week off at Easter, along with various other days holiday throughout the year. The school week is usually from 8am to 2pm six days a week. The students are regularly given work to be done at home.

REQUIREMENTS :

The Italian students participating on exchanges receive credits for their studies abroad as long as they bring back with them some information about the courses that they have been able to follow while in the host country.

In order to obtain the recognition of the Ministry of Education of the school year spent abroad, students must be enrolled in the 12th grade except for those students who are particularly young. In such cases please contact the Regional office.

All the Italian students participating on the AFS school programs must bring to Italy an evaluation and attendance certificate released by their host school, stating subjects and final results. A detailed course description would also be very useful to this end, to be given to the student at the termination of the period of study.