

LEGAMBIENTE activities for the protection and promotion of Cultural Heritage

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LEGAMBIENTE

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Abstract

Legambiente is the most widespread environmental organisation in Italy. It was founded on May 20th 1980. It is a non-profit association with social utility (ONLUS) since 1999; it is an Association for Social Promotion (APS) and it is a Development NGO recognised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2005. Legambiente's purpose is to make people understand that it is by making local changes that we can create a better environment for everyone on a global scale. Legambiente is constantly interested in educating people on environmental issues and their initiatives to safeguard the environment are based on accurate scientific data (scientific environmentalism). Legambiente is involved, however, in the cultural heritage sector because cultural heritage is a key element of the quality of a region and contributes to the creation of social cohesion for both local and national identity. Cultural heritage in a specific territory creates widespread social awareness and becomes an important factor of cultural growth in the area. The conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage represents an important opportunity for the green economy, able to attract business and at the same time to strengthen the concept of development of the country (and of reaction to decline). Furthermore support of cultural heritage and the promotion and organization of cultural activities is stated in Italy's Constitution and these are matters of current legislation at both State and regional levels. It's important to clarify that the principle of the Constitution introduces two essential elements: vertical and horizontal subsidiarity. The first defines the authorities responsible for these matters and these are: the State, the regions, the provinces as well as the municipalities. Moreover vertical subsidiary is assisted by the horizontal one. This can also occur through the involvement of autonomous citizen initiatives, both individually or in partnership. In this way, an important role is given to 'non-profit' sectors (mainly composed of private citizens, volunteers, associations, foundations and private cultural institutions) who thus contribute to the pursuit of public interests, including the promotion of cultural heritage. These are the reasons behind Salvalarte, Legambiente's campaign to promote cultural heritage, otherwise forgotten, because there are many hidden treasures in Italy. Cultural awareness can represent a sustainable alternative and eco-friendly way of developing the territory. Legambiente denounces the terrible situation of many cultural and artistic objects in order to warm public opinion about the risks that lay heavy on Italy's artistic heritage: decay and ruin, vandalism, pollution, overbuilding and, furthermore, all the natural disasters. Over the past ten years Legambiente has developed its own Civil Protection Department, ready to operate in case of disaster. Legambiente trained its Civil Protection teams to a high specialization in several fields: very important is the sector tasked with securing cultural heritage in case of emergency: sculptures, paintings, historical archives and even church organs.

Keywords:

Non-profit, scientific environmentalism, awareness, Salvalarte, cultural heritage

Introduction

Legambiente is the most widespread environmental organisation in Italy. It was founded on May 20th 1980. It is a non-profit association of social utility (ONLUS) since 1999. It is an Association for Social Promotion (APS) and it is a Development NGO recognised by Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2005. Legambiente's purpose is to make people understand that it is by making local changes that we can create a better environment for everyone on a global scale. Legambiente is constantly interested in educating people on environmental issues and its initiatives to safeguard the environment are based on accurate scientific data (scientific environmentalism). Each year Legambiente publishes reports and dossiers.

Ecomafia (Eco-crimes): Legambiente fights the illegal traffic and disposal of waste, illegal excavation and unauthorised construction; it strives to make the public aware of various **environmental illegalities** through an Annual Report and other activities. The Report is realized in cooperation with the Police and other military corps and is acknowledged by Parliamentary Commissions and the President of Republic. The same dossier reports on archeomafia dealings with the illegal trafficking of cultural heritage.

Comuni Ricicloni (Recycling Towns) is a dossier that collects the best recycling practices in Italian towns and cities and is also a "competition" amongst Italian municipalities to award the best recycling system.

Ecosistema Urbano (Urban Ecosystem) is Legambiente's report on the Urban Ecosystem, an annual check-up which tests the quality of life in cities. All the principal towns of the provinces are photographed and compared on the basis of more than one hundred environmental indicators.

Furthermore, Legambiente has numerous educational proposals for schools and scholars:

- ▲ training modules on issues such as protected areas, waste, traffic, water, biodiversity,
- ▲ historical heritage, urban environment;
- ▲ school networks international twinnings with schools from developing countries
- ▲ specific awareness campaigns and activities (Operation Clean Schools, Nontiscordardimé, One Hundred Streets to Play, Jey Festival, etc.)

Legambiente has approximately 50 Centres for Environmental Education spread all over Italy, located in natural parks as well as in urban areas. They offer seminars and courses on environmental issues to schools and visitors all year round.

Why is Legambiente involved in the cultural heritage sector? Because cultural heritage is a key element of the quality of a region and contributes to creating social cohesion and local and national identity. Cultural heritage in a specific territory creates a widespread social awareness and becomes an important factor for cultural growth in the area. The conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage represents an important opportunity for the green economy, able to attract business and at the same time to strengthen the concept of development of the country (and of reaction to decline). Further the support of cultural heritage and the promotion and organization of cultural activities as stated in the National Constitution are matters of concurrent legislation of both State and Regions. It's important to clarify that the principle of the Constitution introduces two essential elements: the vertical and horizontal subsidiarity. The first defines the authorities responsible of these matters and these are: the State, the regions, the provinces as well as the municipalities.

Moreover vertical subsidiarity is assisted by the horizontal one. This can also occur through the involvement of autonomous citizen initiatives, both individually or in partnership. In this way, an important role is given to 'non-profit'

sectors (mainly composed by private citizens, volunteers, associations, foundations and private cultural institutions) who thus contribute to the pursuit of public interests, including the promotion of cultural heritage.

These are the reasons behind Salvalarte, Legambiente's campaign to promote cultural heritage, otherwise forgotten, because there are many hidden treasures in Italy. Cultural awareness can represent a sustainable alternative and eco-friendly way of developing the territory.

Salvalarte's path is studded with success. Here some examples: the recovery and cleaning up activities at Porta San Zeno in Verona in 1996 aimed at giving new life to a portion of an important and neglected city park that is now at the disposal of the city. In 1997 in Padua, Volunteers for Art, kept the Scuola della Carità, the Oratorio del Redentore and the Oratorio di Santa Margherita open, so that visitors are now able to admire the wonderful frescos.

In Viterbo, in 1998, thanks to the European project "Raffaello", the decorated facade of Palazzo Calabresi was restored. In Montepulciano four archives from the XV and XVI century were recently restored thanks to the contribution of FMPS (Monte dei Paschi di Siena Foundation). Other successful interventions: Salerno, ecological park in Pontecagnano; Matera, church of San Pietro Barisano. Among Salvalarte's several aims the intention to get closer to the public and awaken it to the importance of the artistic and historical heritage.

The "Salvalarte" awareness campaign wants to denounce the terrible situation befalling many cultural and artistic Italian works in order to warn the public about the risks that lay heavy on its artistic heritage: decay and ruin, vandalism, pollution, overbuilding and, furthermore all the natural disasters.

Another important Legambiente campaign is "Piccola grande Italia" (Little big Italy) aimed at increasing the value of our cultural heritage – environment, cultural property, typical local products and traditions – of small Italian towns, the irreplaceable backbone of Italian identity. The campaign has already involved 500 towns with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants, mountain and provincial communities and has also produced a law which should shortly be approved by Parliament.

Over the past ten years Legambiente has developed its own **Civil Protection Department** ready to operate in case of disaster. Legambiente has prepared its Civil Protection teams with a high specialization in several fields: specialization in cultural heritage protection in case of emergency is very important; our team is able to safeguard sculptures, paintings, historical archives and even church organs. Legambiente contributed to this governmental emergency relief structure with more than 800 volunteers specialised in safeguarding our cultural heritage, in the fight against forest fires and in rescuing people in emergency situations. There are 30 operating groups and Legambiente has already played a leading role in many interventions: from the earthquakes in the Umbria and Marche regions (1997), to the mudslide in Sarno (1998), from Albania during the war in Kosovo (1999) to the earthquakes in Molise (2002) and L'Aquila 2009.

It deals with and organises courses on:

- ▲ Cultural heritage
- ▲ Marine pollution oil spills
- ▲ Fires
- ▲ Rivers

All the volunteer members of Legambiente's teams receive a high level training to enable them to move and treat all kinds of cultural works; they often include expert architects and engineers who cooperate with the Fire Brigade and the Superintendence for Cultural Heritage to estimate damages and to plan a first disaster management plan to secure the architectural structures.

Volontariambiente (Volunteers for Environment)

Volontariambiente is an Italian organization established in 1999 to give continuity and new working force to the lengthy experience of the volunteer office of the Association Legambiente Onlus. Its main activities include preparing national and international work-camps and coordinating the work camps that the different local groups organize all over the country and which are organized in association with other groups all over the world. It is aimed at enhancing public awareness on environmental issues such as forest-fires or habitat degradation, at collecting information on natural resources, at promoting green tourism in order to develop a sustainable economy, at helping people to be proactive for the conservation of our natural and cultural heritage. While at the camps volunteers do physical work, take excursions and meet the local citizenry and authorities.

Our volunteers are involved in different types of work camps, such as

- ▲ environment recovery, nature conservation, field studies and research
- ▲ forest and brush fire surveillance and prevention
- ▲ conservation of historical sites
- ▲ international cooperation

For example the next two-week camp will be held in Modica-Ispica, Sicily at the end of June. The camp projects will focus on the archaeological area of Modica, the catacombs near Ispica and the village of Pernamazzone. The work camp will be situated along the Cava (Canyon area): prehistoric settlements, Palaeolithic tombs, catacombs, Byzantine churches. Volunteers will install about 30 detailed information signs describing the archaeological sites and showing the direction to each of the three walks. Moreover, they will clear the tracks and settlements of weeds and waste, providing a useful protection from fires, safeguarding green as well as the peculiar biodiversity of the whole Cava.

Volunteers will thus share a stimulating experience of organizing guided visits and cultural events in cooperation with the local archaeological authorities. Volunteers will be involved in repairing fences, painting and putting signs along the paths, cleaning settlements in the Cava and recovering existing walks by removing weeds and building wood stairs.