

# Rondine Cittadella della Pace



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# Rondine Cittadella della Pace



# Mission Statement

The Association Rondine Cittadella della Pace is the fruit of an original and compelling idea. It brings together young people from the opposing sides of countries experiencing conflict who, seen as potential enemies at home, share their living space within a neutral context. This “forced”, but voluntary, experience of communal life has demonstrated that differences and reciprocal doubts tend to evaporate when removed from the context within which they have grown up, showing that dialogue is in fact possible.

Once they have completed their studies the students return to their home countries to embark on high visibility academic, institutional or industrial careers, furthering the cause of peace and multicultural dialogue.

The Association’s mission statement can be summed up as follows:

*To promote the peaceful resolution of conflict through shared life and multicultural dialogue.*



# History

**1977:** the then Bishop of Arezzo, Mons. Telesforo Cioli, hands over to a group of young families the use of the church and other nearby buildings in the village of Rondine, already abandoned several years before. The Community of Rondine is set up, committed to restoring the village to its original beauty. In the years that follow its founding members are joined by young people from two other local Communities and Rondine becomes a training centre aimed specifically at young people and families, while also serving as a shelter and service provider to young families in need.

**1990:** the Association Rondine is founded. Over the years stable relationships are established with the Russian Federation and the Association begins working in the field of international solidarity and cultural exchange.

**1997:** The Association welcomes the first five Chechnian and Russian students to Rondine, thus giving life to the International Hall of Residence. The Association changes its name to Rondine Cittadella della Pace.

**2003:** The first two “Rondine d’Oro” are awarded to Rondine Students testifying to the completion of their study course at the International Hall of Residence.

**2006 (May):** The Association puts on the international event “Piazze di Maggio” on the theme of citizenship.

**2006 (June):** having consolidated its experience in the running of the International Hall of Residence for male students over several years and following the success of “Le Piazze di Maggio”, the Association decides to develop a project destined to the setting up of the women’s section of the Hall of Residence.

**2007 (September):** Ana, Galia, Yulia and Riva, from Macedonia, Israel and Russia, are the first women to begin the feminine section of the Hall of Residence in Rondine.



# Distinguishing features

•**Rooted in the landscape:** Rondine is a physical place, a small medieval village on the banks of the River Arno rescued from dereliction by a small group of determined and hard working volunteers who have built it into an experimental centre for the promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue. The International Hall of Residence has its home among the old houses of the “Cittadella”, respecting its history and traditions as well as its landscape and architecture.

•**Small is beautiful:** and works too! The Association has turned its reduced dimensions into one of its major strengths. The intensity and quality of the “human dimension” that students experience at Rondine are possible thanks to the intentional smallness of the International Hall of Residence. It is the depth of the Rondine Project, rather than its size, that becomes the vehicle through which it promotes the culture of peace and dialogue.

•**An International Calling:** the reduced dimensions of the Association have not stopped it from developing solid relationships over the years with numerous countries that have recently experienced or are currently experiencing conflict. Up to now the International Hall of Residence has welcomed students from Caucasus, Balkans, Mediterranean and Africa.



# The International Hall of Residence

•**The students:** the Hall of Residence is currently open to male and female students who choose to enrol on undergraduate or postgraduate degree courses at the universities of Siena (with campuses in Siena and Arezzo) or Florence. It can house up to a total of 20 students who are recruited according to the following criteria:

- Qualifications
- Written exam
- Interview
- Assessment of the student's future plans on return to his home country.

On arrival at Rondine students immediately enrol on a three month Italian Language course before beginning their chosen undergraduate or postgraduate degree. During their stay students are involved in a variety of initiatives run by the Association (see below), aimed at completing their educational development and contributing to their experience of shared life at Rondine, helping them to cultivate qualities of responsibility and leadership as well as precious interpersonal skills.

Despite difficulties such as learning a new language, social integration and maintaining continuity in their studies, most Rondine students have all obtained good academic results and have managed to set up initiatives that emulate the spirit of Rondine on return to their home countries.



# Related Activities

Related activities are carried out within the following four areas:

- Cultural activities
- Ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue
- Activities organised with schools and local authorities
- Artistic activities

The Association's "**cultural activities**" are run by the International School of Peace Studies which aims at the in-depth study of themes related to the culture of peace and dialogue and at promoting awareness of Rondine's work through the organisation of free seminars, held by university lecturers and experts who are part of the Rondine network.

The objectives of the Association's work in the field of **ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue** focus on encouraging meetings and discussion between the various faiths and confessions. While its point of departure is that of the Catholic faith, the Association aims to favour dialogue between diverse realities and cultures. Examples include: the "Sorgenti" project that brought together high ranking exponents from the Christian Orthodox world; the residential Italian Language Course open to orthodox theologians with scholarships from the "Catholic Committee for Cultural Collaboration" and participation in the Vatican Symposium in 2004.



## Related Activities (continued)

The **third area** of activity aims at opening up the Association's experience of dialogue and shared life to the local communities in and around the Rondine area. Initiatives include: Summer Camps for elementary and middle school children; workshops with schools of all levels (more than 1,500 students are involved in meetings with the Association each year); and one off events organised on specific themes (eg: Holocaust Memorial Day).

Lastly, the Association has, for several years now, included within its events programme art workshops, concerts, music master classes, theatre courses, plays and exhibitions, being sharply aware of the value of **Art** as a tool of universal communication and a vehicle for the promotion of multicultural values.



# Guidelines for development

•**Consolidation:** the growth of the International Hall of Residence has been slow but constant, characterised by difficulties that have always been overcome by the force of the original idea that makes the Association unique. The Association's next steps are directed towards the consolidation of this experience through:

•The reinforcement of the recruitment process: pursuing Rondine's "mission" means selecting a group of students for admission to the International Hall of Residence who demonstrate high academic potential and great motivation for personal enrichment in the sphere of "human relationships". To this end the methodology of the recruitment procedure will need to be perfected through the intensification of official visits to the countries currently represented by the Hall of Residence and the enlargement of the Association's network with foreign partners, essential to the success of the pre-recruitment process.

•The reinforcement of "phase three": Rondine's mission is not complete without considering the students' return to their home countries where they will take up potentially high level professional posts on completion of their university studies in Italy. It is here that Rondine's idea is really "experimented" and ideally extended to those areas where conflict remains unresolved. The development of a network of collaborations with universities, institutions and the world of business in the students' home countries is an essential part of the Association's work, as is its support for the planning and setting up of projects proposed by the Association's "Rondini d'Oro".

•**The Women's Section of the Hall of Residence:** On September, 22nd 2007 the International Hall of Residence was opened to the first young women. Until now, in fact, the students were only male, but from September 2007 the town Rondine has new buildings to welcome the first female students. Ana, Galia, Yulia and Riva, from Macedonia, Israel and Russia, are the first women to begin the feminine section of the Hall of Residence in Rondine.



# A new Community Foundation for Rondine

Announced on the 17th July 2007 at a Press Conference held at the Bishop's Palace, Arezzo, in the presence of the highest institutional, political, civil, religious and business representatives, the **Community Foundation of Rondine** is a new way of giving strength and continuity to the Rondine experience.

The Foundation will see the light officially at the end of 2008 and It will be aimed to **promote a culture of peace, tolerance, respect and dialogue among different cultures and peoples.**

To achieve its purposes the Community Foundation of Rondine has set up an **Honorary Committee**, which will be made up of figures from institutional, cultural, religious, artistic and political fields from all over the world. The committee is designed to create a climate of interest, solidarity and authentic participation regarding the Foundation's initiatives.

The first member of the Honorary Committee of the Community Foundation of Rondine Cittadella della Pace has been the Israeli singer Noa (Achinoam Nini), engaged since ever towards a culture of peace.



# Sponsors

The Association Rondine Cittadella della Pace  
carries out its projects in collaboration with:

**Minister of Foreign Affairs**

**Region of Tuscany  
District Council of Arezzo  
City Council of Arezzo**

**Foundation Monte dei Paschi di Siena  
Ente Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze  
Foundation Mondo Unito  
Foundation Giuseppe e Adele Baracchi  
Foundation Cariplo  
Banca Toscana  
Banca Etruria**

**Businessmen and women for Peace (about 30 business men and women from the Arezzo area)**

**Italian Episcopal Conference  
Tuscan Episcopal Conference  
Diocese of Arezzo-Corotna-Sansepolcro  
Monastery of Camaldoli  
Sanctuary of La Verna  
Province of the Minor Friars of Tuscany**



# Contacts

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