



## **Letter of introduction for temporary participants**

**Dear participant,**

With this letter of introduction we would like to draw your attention to the rules of our community. They spring from our vision in which an important role is reserved for the themes sustainability, art/creativity and spirituality/mysticism. But also they are connected to our code of behavior, a factor determining the atmosphere in our community.

Before talking about our rules though we would like to explain what our working and living community means to us, residents and permanent participants. Our vision in a nutshell so to speak. When talking about ECOLonie we actually mean three locations: Thietry, La Ferme and Forge Neuve. We can imagine that the following information raises some questions. Don't hesitate to discuss these with us, there are no wrong questions.

### **EColonie is our home**

We, residents and permanent participants, consider ourselves as carriers of our community, who provide continuity, who shape and maintain the vision. To us ECOLonie is our home. We have chosen, very consciously, to combine life and work here at this special place in order to shape our ideals step by step.

### **Since 1989**

Since 1989 it has been a beautiful, exciting, but also sometimes difficult challenge. Because a place like this doesn't just happen after all. When the buildings and the 7 hectare of grounds at Thietry were bought there where only empty constructions without any facilities. Roofs were covered with asbestos sheets. Now we have 65 hectare at our disposal, including a farm, the mystical hammock Forge Neuve and extensive facilities. We're very proud of the fact that this has been shaped in this way, without any subsidies, in the course of time. Thanks to the efforts of thousands of participants and residents. When you arrive here for the first time you are - in a manner of speaking - boarding a running train

with a rich and unruly history in the luggage wagon. There is still a lot to accomplish, because we still have a lot of desires for ECOlonie and for the world. We consider ourselves as creating and creative realists. Since we have to pay for the material changes or investments ourselves from our earnings, this process is slower than we would like to sometimes. After all we also need to live from this money with 30 people on average.

### **Spirituality at ECOlonie**

In the booklet ‘Lifeline for beginners’ Wil Derkse describes Benedictine spirituality for daily life in monastery tradition. In short he says: ‘*Before Enlightenment: cut wood and fetch water; after Enlightenment: cut wood and fetch water*’. In this we recognize ourselves. Our spirituality is also simple, little spectacular, down to earth and complements our so-called EcoZeN lifestyle. Instead of cutting wood and pitching water one may read: hoeing, spading, sawing, harvesting, goat care, baking bread, cooking, painting, cleaning etc. We don’t strive for exclusive insights or mystical experiences. But those experiences do occur though. It is an art to learn to see this inclusive spirituality, as we call it. An example of this could be the way we carry out our daily activities with love and attention, discipline and dedication, as an ode to life. Consider us in this regard as ‘present-day monks’, who don’t wear habits and are not a member of any order.

### **Love for the Being of ECOlonie**

As life takes place everywhere according to paradoxes (ups and downs, joy and sorrow), over here it takes place as under a magnifying glass, because working and living coincide here. This is not an easy task as our history, as well as the history of many communities throughout the world, has taught us. This way of life could not be accomplished if it were not founded upon a profound Vision in general and a great Love for ECOlonie in particular.

As mentioned, we have made the choice based on this vision to share this place with equally-minded, consciously-living fellow human beings. To further develop this multi-faceted place in a reciprocal relationship (ECOlonie and the individual person).

## **Unique meeting place**

On average, we receive about 180 temporary participants of all ages each year, with their own history, life story, insights, motives, dreams and desires. The same goes for the nearly 3000 guests (adults and children) who come to stay with us for on average 6 nights a year.

## **Open, but at the same time vulnerable**

This openness is based on the trust we offer on forehand to anybody coming to visit us. Think for instance about the rooms without locks and paying in the shop without assistance outside peak-season.

Combined with our policy to offer a chance to anybody, regardless of background or personal history, it also makes us vulnerable to unintended negative influences too! It is our collective responsibility to be extra alert about this.

That's why we will go somewhat deeper into the subject of our community rules and explain why they matter so much. The essence of this is that you treat our house in the same way that you expect guests to treat you and your own house rules: open and respectful. Besides, our house rules are meant in particular to lead our life here with our vision as guideline in a desirable direction as well as to be advantageous to growth. Consider these rules as a framework, a trellis, along which a plant develops in the desired direction.

## **ECOLonie as practice place**

We, the residents, after all those years know -and not just us- that this deep-felt desire to create a livable world doesn't get fulfilled all by itself. Peter Sloterdijk, a 'culture philosopher', says, for good reason, in his book *You have to change your life*: To live consciously is to practice, practice and practice once more. We consider ECOLonie as a place to practice for ourselves as residents and permanent participants as well as for anybody coming to work here temporarily. The most important daily exercise may be the one in which we wish to change, to put it candidly, from an 'I-directed/to possess' attitude to a 'we-directed/to be' attitude to life.

This orientation to life demands for choices to be made, time after time. This desire to change asks for small and big sacrifices, it may hurt, for instance because it means leaving behind 'the familiar'.

In this endeavor for higher consciousness and the training of a different attitude though, we are, and we are very conscious of this, whether we are here for a short or a longer period of time, forever a beginner.

## **ECOLonie as mirror of your own resistances**

Resistances, typical for any process of change, may present themselves in all possible ways. Over here you ‘detach’ yourself from your old surroundings and its patterns and familiarities, just because of the (geographic) location. Especially in a place like this you are confronted with your own shady sides and you are thrown back on yourself. ECOLonie then functions like a magnifying glass, as mentioned before. You may also be disappointed in your expectations about us. This is understandable, because reality is often/sometimes different/more resilient than the words we all use to describe our dreams and ideals. The question is: how do you deal with these feelings and thoughts?

## **Discuss it in the ‘golden way’**

Of course it is your own personal choice to share your experiences with others. But when it concerns negative feelings and thoughts concerning work or other people, we expect you to share these with one of the residents. At the bottom of this letter you will find the names of the people you should contact.

If you do not choose for this ‘golden way’ but you express yourself to others in a negative way about these matters, then we call this phenomenon ‘murmeratio’; it has many faces.

## **Murmeratio**

In the aforementioned booklet by Derkse this phenomenon is mentioned extensively, especially because it is so important. Murmuratio can be defined as a way of negative speaking. That can be grumbling, but also speaking badly, gossiping, constantly talking about personal problems, etc. Derkse writes: *“Murmuratio acts in an organization (community) like a slow and subcutaneously working poison. It clouds the vision, drains energy and affects the heart.”*

Also David Spangler of the Findhorn community mentions this symptom in his book ‘The Laws of Manifestation’. In annex-2 of our Vision we quote him comprehensively. He also lists other factors under the term murmeratio. For instance: just listening to murmeratio without pointing out to the other that this is incorrect behavior.

Years of experience – since 1989: we are one of the oldest European contemporary communities/eco-villages – unfortunately leads us to the same conclusion. Just like Derkse we see moaners looking each other

up, enforcing one another and infecting others. “Murmeratio knows its own propagations”, as Derkse writes. It is sand in the engine of, and poison in, a community like ours, where people wish to live in a positive, safe, hopeful and future-oriented way.

Most of the part-time participants share this positive outlook on life and don't participate in murmeratio. It is in particular the exception who can negatively affect the atmosphere. They are often not conscious of their behavior, because this habit has become a self-evident, nearly an addictive attitude to life.

David Spangler writes those radical words about this: “People who deviate of the principles of growth and balance and who don't show a consistent growth during a certain period of time ( ..... ) such people must change their attitude or leave.”

## **Some of our house rules**

### **Residents, permanents and part-time participants don't smoke, so even not off our grounds.**

We are an ecological centre where healthy living, healthy food and organic production of food forms one of the pillars of our way of life and work. We find it incompatible that someone who chooses to be here and to participate here at the same time pollutes his or her own body and our living environment by means of smoking.

Guests are also not allowed to smoke on our terrains.

### **Buying ecological products**

In our community we use organic food items from our own gardens and dairy farm. This is not sufficient. Therefore we purchase also a lot of organic products. Like coffee, butter, apple syrup, tahin, coffee creamer, sugar, biscuits, etc.

Unfortunately there are exceptions to this rule and some certain indispensable products are not available in an organic version. We assume (part time) participants to deal likewise when purchasing products elsewhere and not to buy non-organic products unnecessarily.

### **Using cell phones and other wireless transmitters**

The use of every kind of digital wireless transmitter is not permitted on our grounds. Even not (very quickly) at night in your own tent/room. You are allowed to put your phone in airplane mode. In case of doubt

please contact the reception to verify whether you could use a certain device. Do not take any risk in this matter. There are residents, participants and guests who are severely affected by this, with resulting health problems.

Wireless communication is not needed anyway with us because we have taken care for effective alternative cable connections with among other advantages the possibility to phone for free. With your cell phone you may phone at the parking next to the main road. There you can also make use of a Wi-Fi connection that meets our conditions.

In our information center you will find extensive information on this subject or else ask at the reception.

### **Additional rules:**

- We try to assign a ‘buddy’ to every newly arrived temporary participant, who will guide you at first and help answering your questions.
- Each Friday morning at 11 am there is a meeting to discuss practical issues for the coming week. Everybody will attend.
- If you wish to wash clothes your buddy will explain how it works.
- If you wish to go on-line you can do so at the information center, in your cabin or room. It’s free.
- If you have food restrictions, you can discuss the possibilities for your diet at the reception.
- It goes without saying you don’t use (soft)drugs. Concerning alcohol we expect you to be very moderate. Abuse is not accepted.
- If you don’t eat with us, please **sign out at the reception before 8.30 am** and before 10.30 am on Sunday. You will be charged 10 Euros per meal if you don’t sign out.
- When buying in our shop you pay immediately in cash and note down your purchases at the spot on the registry list.
- When staying over 4 weeks you can get one piece of fruit each day (apple or pear). You can fetch it from the stock yourself. Additionally you get a 20% reduction on food and drinks bought in the shop (not Oikos and non-food products).
- Only environmentally friendly soaps, shampoos and toothpastes are allowed to be used. They are available in our shop.

- Do not leave lights switched on unnecessary, inside nor outside and shower briefly please. We don't waste water, electricity or gas.
- If you are suddenly reduced in physical mobility or otherwise inconvenienced let us know. We will see what we can do for you.
- During work we ask you not to use IPod, ear- or headphones.
- You are requested not to enter the dining room in dirty (working) clothes or muddy shoes. Stop your work in time so you can get changed on time to be present when the meal begins.
- After 22.00 pm we wish no more music to be made. After 23.00 we expect complete silence at all our grounds and inside the buildings. Only on campfire nights (Wednesdays and Saturdays) and only at the campfire spot is this extended until 23.30.
- Keep your own accommodation (room, cabin, caravan) clean, as well as the toilets and showers you use. There is a cleaning schedule for shared bathrooms.
- Your ECOlonie bed linen has to be washed once every two weeks, including molton (matrass cover) and second pillowcase. Put it in the designated basket in the laundry room.
- Finally we ask you to **clean your room, caravan or cabin before you leave ECOlonie**. We will check your accommodation together with you on your day of departure.

### **What can you do at ECOlonie?**

The work activities you get to do depends on the season you are here, the things you like to be involved in, your capabilities, your skills, the time you have available and our wishes. When possible we talk beforehand to see what your wishes are and to see if we can meet those wishes. If you are here for a longer period of time we try to give you one or more permanent tasks.

Of course in your spare time you can participate in activities, most of them only on offer in summer season. For workshops you pay half-rate. No reduction on courses and massage. There are exceptions to these when you are here over three months.

## **Workdays/hours**

We expect you to work 40 hours (excluding mealtimes and coffee/tea breaks). The season you are here determines the rhythm of your work . We expect far more flexibility of you in the busy summer months than in other seasons. In general you are off on Sundays. Your second day off is usually split up in two half days off on Wednesday and Saturday. But it can be that you are planned those days to assist in the kitchen or in the guest house for instance. Together we decide when you can be off on alternative (half)days. We always expect you to keep count of your hours by yourself. If it turns out at the end of the week you have worked extra time you let us know and you can compensate this the week after.

**Start of the working day:** On working days you can have breakfast between 7.45 am and 8.15 am. Prepare yourself at 8.15 am, so you can be at your working place at 8.30 am. When you have a day off, you can have breakfast until 9 am (10 am on Sunday).

## **What else is good to know**

- Besides a number of fixed tasks (especially when you are here more than a couple of weeks) during breakfast and lunch times we discuss what other activities are assigned to you for that day. In this way we try to be as flexible as possible in fulfilling all necessary tasks.
- If you wish to speak about your personal functioning, the period of your stay or any problems that may bother you we invite you to discuss this with Johan or Henkjan.

We wish you an inspiring and pleasant time at ECOlonie.

The residents and permanent participants