

ECOLonie

Letter of introduction for part-time participants

Dear participant,

By means of this letter of introduction we would like to draw your attention to the rules of our community. They find their origins in our vision. An important role is attributed to 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. Like our vision in a nutshell. When talking about ECOLonie we talk about the locations Thietry, La Ferme and Forge Neuve. We can imagine that following information raises some queries. Don't hesitate to ask explanations, wrong questions don't exist.

ECOLonie is our home

We, residents and permanent participants, consider ourselves as carriers of our community, as they who ascertain the continuity, who shape and entertain 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 step by step our ideals.

Since 1989

Since 1989 it has been a beautiful, exciting, but not always just so easy, challenge. Because such a place doesn't materialize just like that 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 amenities. 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. So arriving here for the first time in a manner of speaking you board a running train with a rich and unruly history in the luggage wagon. There rests still a lot to accomplish, because we still have a lot to desire for ECOLonie and for the world. We consider ourselves as creating and creative realists. In view of the physical changes and/or investments that we need to finance with our gains, this process runs slower than we'd 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'*. Herein 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 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 accomplishes itself everywhere according to paradoxes (ups and downs, joy and sorrow), over here it achieves itself 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, based on this vision we made the choice to share this place with equally-minded, consciously-living, fellow-creatures. To further develop this multi-faceted place in reciprocal relationship (ECOlonie and the individual person).

Unique meeting place

On average we receive each year about 180 temporary participants of all ages, all with their own personal history, views, insights, motivations, dreams and wishes. 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 renders us at the same time vulnerable to unmeant negative influences too! It is our collective responsibility to be extra alert in this respect.

That's why we enter somewhat more profoundly into the subject of our community rules and explain why they matter so much. The quintessence is as follows: You treat our home the way you would expect your guests to treat you and how to handle your house rules: outright 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. See 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 with just 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 by the geographic position already. Especially in a place like this you are confronted with your own shady sides and you are made to reduce to yourself. ECOLonie then functions like a magnifying glass, as mentioned before. It is also possible you may be deceived by your expectations about us.

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?

Making it debatable 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 would not choose for this 'golden way' but you express yourself to others in a negative way about these, then we call this phenomenon 'murmeratio'; it has many faces.

Murmeratio

In fore called booklet by Derkse this phenomenon is mentioned extensively, especially because it is so important. Murmuratio you may define as a way of negative speaking. It could be moaning, slandering, talking annoyed, continuously talking about personal problems, etc. Derkse writes: *"Murmuratio acts in an organization (community) like a slow and subcutaneously working poison. It causes troubled vision, drains energy and corrodes 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 counts still other factors under the heading 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. For guests we make an exception. Guests who still smoke (a small percentage) may do so near their tent or at a spot indicated by us.

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 unnecessary.

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 own tent/room. You are allowed to put your phone in the airplane mode. In case of doubt please contact the reception in advance 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 suited to 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 part-time participant, who will guide you at first and may 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 to proceed.
- You can 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 discuss at the reception office the possibilities for your diet.
- 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 inform the reception desk before 10.30 am. A forfeit of 10 Euros will be charged when omitted to inform us beforehand.

- 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 in the reserve. Additionally you can a 20% reduction on food bought in the shop. (no reduction on non-food, dairy and Oikos products)
- Only environmentally friendly soaps, shampoos and toothpastes are permitted 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 alone or in common with other (part-time participants). If shared cleaning Rota's are made.
- Finally we ask you to leave your room, caravan or cabin clean and tidy when you leave ECOLonie. A check-up will be made 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 take it you 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 Wednesday mornings and Saturday afternoons. 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.

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