



**VOLUNTARIOS
ITINERANTES**

2016 REPORT

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Presentation

The idea for **Voluntarios Itinerantes** came from a group of people wanting to improve the lives of animals living in shelters across Catalonia through specific actions, but with a global vision of our mission.

As an association, our official date of establishment is September 12, 2016, but we had been working together as a group since the previous year. The characteristics we

wanted to distinguish us from other associations are prior training, the creation of a group capable of having continuity, the planning of projects, and the capacity to form a viable plan of action. We know that this prior work does not guarantee success, but we are convinced that the lack of it would have led to failure.

Although we are a young association, our members have a wide variety of experience that encourages progress, in addition to the creation of lasting knowledge.

The reason for writing this annual report, even though we have only been an association for three months, is to promote internal transparency. We want everyone to have free access to all information generated and work to set the example of good practices. We know that we will sometimes make mistakes, but we will be conscious of them, learn from them and make improvements.

Mission, vision, and values

Our mission is to provide solutions to the organizational needs and lack of volunteers at animal shelters, so that they can become self-sufficient and improve the quality of life of the animals in their care.

Our vision for the future is to end the isolation and lack of resources, both human and monetary, that most shelters experience.

Our values are transparency, defense of animals, positive treatment, awareness of social needs, promotion of teamwork, motivation, compromise, professionalism, and of course, involvement.

Members of the board, founders and committees

We are not going to provide a description of each individual member, but we do want to explain our internal organization.

The board is made up of four members, each member having distinct responsibilities. Each position is described in detail in our statutes, which can be found on our website: www.voluntariositinernes.org:

President: Jaime Mateu.

Vice president: Francesc Ribes.

Secretary: Marta Morera.

Treasurer: Jordi Pastor.

These four people are founding members, in addition to the following four members: Ana Acedo, Robin Motheral, Victor Villanueva y María Tur Sesé. Each member has had responsibilities with the association since before it was established.

From the beginning, the idea of Voluntarios Itinerantes was to work in committees, but this has not been possible for several reasons. It is a task we leave pending for 2017: to be capable of dividing the work.

ASSESSMENT OF 2016 PERFORMANCE

It would be unfair to the collective efforts made throughout 2016 to simply assess the projects carried out since Voluntarios Itinerantes was established as an association in September. This is why we will discuss all projects carried out in 2016. First, we want to mention each individual activity and its repercussions.

In line with the values that define the association, we organized an **open house** at the Òdena (Anoia) shelter in mid-September to promote awareness. Up to this date, the shelter was mostly unknown to the community of Igualada, the largest city in the area. The goal for the open house was twofold: to find people interested in adoption and to find people interested in collaborating, both monetarily (by donation) or by participating as volunteers.

In order to promote the open house, we created an event on Facebook and handed out flyers in Igualada accompanied by dogs from the shelter. In hindsight, Sunday was not the best day to promote the open house in the city of Igualada because there were less people out. We also lacked proper T-shirts, which made it difficult for people to associate us with a specific activity for the shelter. The APAN shelter was much more widely known than the Olescan-Òdena shelter. In spite of these difficulties, the two open house events held were successful in that we made new contacts who became volunteers.

Looking back on the event, we believe that promotion could be improved by choosing a better time, the right location and, more importantly, there must be clear instructions on how to get to the shelter to avoid people getting lost.

During the La Mercé festival, we were invited to participate in an **Animal Expo**, which took place in Plaça Catalunya. At that time, we did not own the dogs we took to the expo, but we decided to participate in order to find potential adoptive families for the dogs in Òdena, knowing the future of the shelter was uncertain. We felt it was a good opportunity to promote adoptions and find new volunteers.

The **Dogs & Family** expo in Barcelona (November 2016) was not directly related to our idea of volunteering and promoting the #los97deÒdena campaign, but we decided to participate in order to make new contacts and get to know other animal associations. Although we did not meet our goal of finding people interested in collaborating with our association, we did get to know several other animal associations that may be useful to use in the future.

The **Christmas Fairs** in Sant Cugat and Barcelona, which took place the same weekend in December, were aimed to promote adoption and awareness of the dogs still waiting for a family at the shelter. Although no adoptions resulted from the two fairs, contacts were made for possible adoptive families. Fairs specialized in promoting adoption require a great deal of follow-up with the contacts made and often do not lead to adoption.

Actions taken

Of all the projects carried out at the shelter, **improving the facilities** was a priority in order to reduce the number of dogs in one cage, which should be no more than 2 in order to guarantee the best care. To do this, we set up fencing in the two exterior areas with houses to provide shelter in the winter.

- First, we put up fencing in the “senior dogs” zone. We build covered houses from pallets, with insulation and straw to keep around 12 dogs warm in the winter.
- Second, we prepared a zone for the younger dogs, with the capacity to shelter at least 8 dogs from the rain and cold.
- Third, thanks to the collaboration of Podencoworld, we built 3 exterior zones for podencos, and moved 10 dogs from the cages to this zone.

One of the biggest challenges of 2016 was to build a **warehouse** to store donations and set up the main house as a center for veterinary consults. Our priority was to solve the problem of disorder, dirtiness and waste of resources with no hygienic zone for treating dogs. In order to carry out this project, we could not work with only recycled materials. We needed funding to buy the proper materials, so we decided to launch a **crowdfunding** to finance the project. We are thankful to the over 100 donors who contributed to our cause and helped us reach our goal. Thanks to them, we were able to build a great warehouse and finally implement some basic **logistical** guidelines in order to make the best use of the resources available to the shelter. The back room of the house became a quarantine area for dogs that were wounded or needed to be isolated to due possible illnesses.

We did not only work on construction projects. We tried to help facilitate the daily work at the shelter. Logically, having fewer dogs in the cages makes the work go faster. On the other hand, in order to manage the waste without the possibility to empty the container every month, we created compost piles to dispose of excrement.

Socialization of dogs is necessary for two fundamental reasons. The more sociable the dog is, the easier it will be to find an adoptive family. Also, if sociable dogs can be walked together, the cages can be cleaned more quickly and the dogs can enjoy more time in patio area.

Walking the dogs allows us to get to know their behavior, both with people and other dogs, as well as other stimuli outside the shelter such as bicycles, cars, runners, strange noises, etc.

Human resources

Our human resources have mainly been volunteers and members. The group Voluntarios Itinerantes (nomadic volunteers), as its name indicates, is not made up of a set number of people committed for the long term. We understand that, as an association, we must be flexible so that all collaborators feel comfortable. This does not mean that the people who've collaborated have been different every week. From the very beginning, we've had a set group of approximately ten volunteers who participated almost every weekend, becoming more and more involved at the shelter and in the association. Looking back on all the weekends we've enjoyed together in 2016, the maximum

number of volunteers reached 30 when we organized an excursion to sell calendars in Igualada. Many Sundays, we've had around 20 people working on different projects, especially the weekends of expos and activities outside the shelter. We've always had at least 10 volunteers on a Sunday, each one involved in a different way. Some people came with a friend one Sunday and never came back. Some came for several weeks and then stopped coming. Others came once a month or every two weeks. Then there are those who've participated in almost every activity we've done.

In order to manage this flexible and changing dynamic, we've always prioritized organization so that there is never a large group of new volunteers on the same day. In addition, new volunteers are always accompanied by veterans. This helps to make their experience more rewarding and to avoid feeling like they don't know what to do.

Our promotion has been mostly word of mouth, both in person and through social media. We have not carried out any specific volunteer recruitment activity, nor have we tried to focus our publication on a specific profile. We simply tried to show what we'd done and spread the word. People have contacted us offering to volunteer.

#Los97deÒdena (the 97 of Òdena)

If the *crowdfunding* was our first big campaign to raise funds and improve the shelter, #Los97deÒdena was the biggest challenge we faced at the end of the year. As Voluntarios Itinerantes, our idea was to improve the shelter, find a group of dedicated volunteers from the area who could help, and then move on to collaborate with another shelter. When we thought we'd finally reached this point, things were going well and we could move on, the news came: the land owner has terminated his contract with Olescan and, therefore, more than 100 dogs must leave the premises by the end of the year. We tried to negotiate the management of the facilities, to continue with our project by managing the shelter ourselves, but the owner was not interested in our proposal. Facing the situation before us, with 2 months to find a solution for these dogs, we started a campaign to find adoptive and foster families. The weekend following the announcement, the shelter filled with families and roughly 30 dogs were adopted or reserved. The following weeks were slower, people started to forget that time was running out and many dogs were still waiting for a family, particularly the scared and/or complicated ones. At this point, foreign associations began to collaborate to promote

adoptions all over Europe. A special thanks to Podencoworld and their work with volunteers in Òdena, helping to socialize some of the most difficult podencos.

In addition to the #Los97deÒdena, we launched two more campaigns: #losinvisiblesdeÒdena (the invisible dogs at Òdena) and #PPPdeÒdena (potentially dangerous dogs at Ódena). As a result, over 100 dogs were adopted in two months, but there were still 19 left at the shelter and in foster homes. As Voluntarios Itinerantes, we could not leave a project unfinished, which is why we took ownership of these dogs and are committed to provide for them until we find them a family.

Social media networks

In 2016, we launched a campaign to promote our actions, projects, and activities through two fundamental channels: Facebook and the website.

The Facebook page has helped us to reach a great number of people interested in participating in our activities. The growth of followers and interaction has been progressive and organic. The idea is that people share publications because they have our same values and interest.

On the other hand, we have a website to post general information so that people can learn about our vision, values, and long-term projects. The website also features a blog which references many topics of interest for our followers: happy adoptions, dog training advice, ideas on how to improve our work as volunteers, etc.

Our Instagram and YouTube accounts have been good resources to show our activities and promote the dogs in adoption.

Social media networks that have featured us

In our few months as an association, as a result of the #los97deÒdena campaign, we have been featured in different media in order to spread the word about the situation of the dogs at the shelter and the work we're doing.

- [SrPerro](#) wrote a blog post about the work we're doing
- The website [Animalados](#) also wrote a post about our work in Òdena.
- The radio program *Care about what's happening in our city!* on the Barcelona City station interviewed us to spread the word about our association and the

project in Òdena. This is a channel especially for expats living in Barcelona, many of our volunteers fit this profile.

On the other hand, since we launched the #los97deÒdena campaign, we have met with different associations that have offered to collaborate and help us in our project and we'd like to thank them for their collaboration. We hope to continue working with them in the future.

- Faada made available to us their distribution portal and assessment of what we would need to take on the #los97deÒdena campaign.
- We shared experiences with the Trifolium Foundation, who we met at Dogs & Family, and they were very helpful.
- We made ties with CAAC Barcelona during our participation the expos in September and December.
- We've recently contacted Adopta PPP and Tarrascobull, who will help us to promote adoption for our PPPs.
- Animals sense Sostre has also provided us with help and support.

Goals for 2017

This new year brings new goals as an association and we're already working on them.

- Find families for all the dogs in our care since January 1st and guarantee that they live in the best conditions possible until they are adopted.
- Start collaborating with another shelter and continue developing new projects
- Continue making new contacts and promoting our activities so that more people will join us.
- Start a sponsoring campaign to fund the cost of caring for our animals.
- Maintain and strengthen the contacts made with European shelters as a result of the #los97deÒdena campaign because we believe that responsible adoption in counties like Holland, Germany, Sweden, or Belgium is a good solution for helping shelters.

