

An ECFI-talk with Carola Carrazone, Secretary General Assifero on the First Community Foundation Conference in Italy

90 participants from across the Italy, including representatives from many of the 37 Italian Community Foundations, attended a conference in November organized by Assifero, the national support organisation for foundations and community foundations in Italy, in collaboration with ACRI, the Italian association of banking origin. They heard from experts on Italian civil society learnt about opportunities for peer learning exchange. The ECFI/Assifero Italian Guide to Community Foundations was launched at the [event](#) (in Italian). 'This is the beginning of a phase of a more informed, connected and effective ecosystem at a national level – we anticipate an annual national conference, structured peer learning among them and, hopefully, study visits and European exchanges through ECFI.' said Carola Carrazone, Assifero Director. A report on the conference can be found [here](#) (in Italian).

What was the idea behind this first Italian Conference for Community Foundations?

On the 24th November 2017, the first Italian conference on community foundations was held in a venue of the Senate of Italy, *Sala di Santa Maria in Aquiro*, Rome bringing to light, for the first time in our country, the current major social relevance of community foundations in Italy.

Assifero, as national association of all non-banking origin foundations and philanthropic institutions, has always devoted a great deal of attention to community foundations, promoting among them interactions, circulation of information, exchange of knowledge, trust and partnership relationships, and their individual / collective capacities building.

Still too little is known by the general public and still little acknowledged in our country as a strategic partner of human and sustainable development,

community foundations today represent a key stakeholder in the Italian system of institutional philanthropy.

In Italy, the establishment of community foundations began in 1999 with foundations in Lecco and Como. Today there are 37 registered community foundations in Italy on the atlas of the GFCF – Global Fund for Community Foundations.

More than 30 of them are now fully operational and at least two new ones are in the process of being established in Fano and Agrigento, Italy.

Different by origin, size, vision, methodology and operations, and deeply rooted in the fabric of a given community, Italian community foundations represent different forms of community philanthropy. But always, they are fundamental platforms for bridging local institutions and third sector organizations in order to, at the local level, face complex, social, economic and cultural challenges that characterize today world.

Inspired by the First Global Summit on Community Philanthropy held in Johannesburg on 1st and 2nd December 2016 and by first European Conference of Community Foundations held in Cardiff on 11th and 12th September 2017, Assifero launched the idea of a national conference in order to promote visibility and strengthen the national network of community philanthropy, in collaboration with Acri- the Italian association of banking origin foundations, has promoted the first Italian conference on community foundations.

How many people/foundations attended the one day meeting?

90 people from all over Italy, from Torino to Messina, from Pesaro to Aosta, from Lecce to Monza.

What was the highlight/result of this meeting?

Great visibility at national level, sharing and exchanging of knowledge among community foundations, which by their very nature often, live in autocratic isolation – having local beneficiaries, local donors, local assets, local social capital and local officers. The one-day national conference was not a single stand-alone event. It was the final step of a meaningful 10 months long participatory process that, also thanks to the preparation of the ECFI guide, involved 30 community foundations and the beginning of a phase of a more informed, connected and effective ecosystem at a national level.

Are there next steps? A next conference? Any kind of follow-up?

Dissemination of the guide among different stakeholders in order to broaden the understanding of the idea of community foundations, an annual national conference every year hosted by a different community foundation in Italy, a structured peer learning among them and, hopefully, study visits and European community foundations to community foundations exchanges through ECFI.

Thanks, Carola on behalf of ECFI, January 2018.

ROMA, 24 NOVEMBER 2017