

April 2020

Assifero empowers community foundations in Italy



‘Community foundations all over Italy have been amazing - demonstrating their ability to be nimble, effective, creative and close to people in their response, and capitalizing on their material and immaterial assets, social trust and local capacities. Even amidst the crisis a new community foundation was launched in Fano - with a motto that could not be more relevant for the time “Together, we are stronger”’.

Carola Carazzone, [Assifero](#)

Since the beginning of the crisis, Assifero has provided thoughtful leadership - from encouraging a shift to core funding to contributing to the development of an on-line portal mapping needs of the sector with the initiatives of philanthropic institutions. These actions not only meet immediate needs but also may lead to a more informed dialogue between non-profits and funders. Assifero has been particularly active in supporting the development and strengthening of the community foundation movement in Italy, as described below.

Assifero has been making the case for supporting community foundations and their work. It has connected community foundations with other types of foundations and has highlighted the potential for the crisis to be regenerative - resulting in new ways of working together to reach the most vulnerable in society.

It has been involved for example in co-designing a programme to counteract the economic and social consequences in the recovery phase of the pandemic with community foundations in the South of Italy (Messina, San Gennaro, Val di Noto, Salernitana, Centro Storico di Napoli, Agrigento e Trapani). This programme targets people in situations of poverty (informal economy, gig economy, small and medium entrepreneurs, and self-employed) through bespoke microcredit and grant schemes. It entails the use of “empowering budgets”, a tool already put in place by the Messina Community Foundation. Such budgets consist of personalised lump-sum amounts that will be used as investment capital: they will generate for beneficiaries durable stocks of tangible (productive equipment, etc.) and intangible (debt coverage, relational goods and knowledge, etc.) assets, in order to build resilience, preserve their rights (housing, work, etc.) and plan the post-crisis phase.

In addition, Assifero has been working with REVES and other strategic partners to explore more in depth the potential for the utilisation of residual funds of the 2014-2020 structural funds framework to counteract economic and social consequence of Covid-19, involving community foundations.

Community foundations in the North of Italy, especially in the Lombardy region, are raising an impressive amount of financial resources (e.g. Brescia Community Foundation reached €16.5m, Fondazione Comunitaria del Lecchese €4m) while also capitalising on their assets, social capital and trust. While of course the main focus still remains the healthcare crisis, many are widening the objectives of their funds and they are addressing resources to Third Sector organisations, which are on the frontline of tackling the crisis. Examples include:

- **Fondazione Comunità di Milano**, in addition to creating a fund dedicated to COVID 19, called #Milanoaiuta, also established a new strategic partnership with Fondazione Fiera Milano (corporate foundation in Milan) and Ronald McDonald House Charities (the Italian branch) bringing additional funds to healthcare.
- **Fondazione Comunità del Canavese** (Piemont) in addition to creating a fund, also developed an online platform that makes available to citizens the services offered by Third Sector organisations.
- **Fondazione Comunità di Mirafiori** launched the Spesa Sospesa service, where people can buy groceries for the most vulnerable. The foundation acts as key contact point, connecting those in needs and those ready to donate.
- **Fondazione Comunitaria della Valle d'Aosta** has created a strong partnership with several actors in the territory in order to be more effective and widespread in their action and to include the broad range of competencies and skills needed in this time of emergency, acted on the healthcare issues and the social ones.
- **Fondazione Comunità di Monza e Brianza and Fondazione del VCO**, in addition to gathering and distributing funds, have issued an ad hoc survey for mapping local Third Sector needs and problems.

Community foundations in the South actively put in place initiatives for tackling the economic and social crisis.

In addition to launching the petition to the Minister of the South for supporting Third Sector organisations in the South to reinforce the social infrastructure (by the end of April it reached almost 4,000 signatories), they work to counteract the effects of the crisis in their community. Here are some examples:

- **FOQUS Quartieri spagnoli**, in addition to providing groceries to the most vulnerable, they are also buying books from independent local bookshops to distribute to the children in the neighbourhood.
- **Fondazione Comunità di San Gennaro** has put in place a programme to sustain the most vulnerable families.
- **Fondazione Comunità Centro Storico di Napoli** launched the above mentioned Spesa Sospesa service.
- **Fondazione Comunità di Val di Noto** is working to provide medical supplies and to support children and families from an educational point of view, providing tablets and

credit for the Internet connection, and reinforcing the online activities of their projects.

- **Fondazione Comunitaria di Agrigento e Trapani**, which was established only one year ago, is providing support to local Third Sector organisations through the creation and development of a platform that will allow:
 - family groups to buy from local stores (part of the purchase will go straight to the fund the foundation has set for the emergency);
 - ethical ecommerce, that will promote the purchase of products/services of Third Sector bodies or young social entrepreneurs rooted in the territory.

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