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## THE UNSTOPPABLE ITALIAN COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS MOVEMENT

*THE STORY OF FOUR NEW FULLY OPERATING COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS, A DEMONSTRATION OF THE MEANINGFUL ROLE THAT COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY PLAYS IN ITALY*

*Assifero, the main foundation support organisation in Italy, recognizing the potential of community foundations has been committed to developing the movement there. Below Francesca Mereta describes how Assifero has helped bring another four community foundations become established.*



Francesca Mereta, Assifero

Community Foundations (CFs) represent one of the key actors in the Italian philanthropic system and are currently experiencing an increase in their number and steady qualitative growth. Assifero regularly works with community foundations, informing and connecting them at both the country and the European level. It is also very active in supporting the establishment of new CFs, providing them non-financial support, that is, in particular, relational, human, and intellectual capital. For instance, among others, it helps pool together donors from different Italian regions and provides sharing networking and learning opportunities to founding members of new CFs. In November 2017, Assifero organized the first-ever national conference on community foundations and, especially thanks to ECFI, published the [very first guide on CFs](#) in Italy. Since then, this conference has become a regular annual event, open not only to operating community foundations and people inclined to establish new ones but also a broader range of stakeholders, interested in exploring and supporting the community philanthropy concept. In late 2018, Assifero launched “Allargare la Comunità tra Comunità”, a 3-years capacity building and knowledge exchange program aimed at making Italian CFs more informed, more connected, and even more effective.

Today we are going to tell the story of four new Italian Community foundations: Fondazione Comunità di Milano, Fondazione Comunitaria di Agrigento e Trapani and Fondazione Valsesia, fully operating since 2019, and Munus-Fondazione Comunità di Parma, officially established in 2016 and member of Assifero since the beginning of 2019.

### **FONDAZIONE DI COMUNITÀ MILANO**

*A community foundation serving its community through listening-action model*

Fondazione Comunità di Milano sustains the development and strengthening of a supportive and integrated community, and it promotes the implementation of sustainable local projects thanks to the contribution of local institutions, third sector organizations, businesses, and citizens. Its establishment process started in 2016. In October 2017, Fondazione Cariplo, one of the most important Italian banking foundations that since 1999 have promoted and supported the development of community foundations in Lombardy and northern Piedmont regions, approved the establishment path proposed by the Organizing Committee, made up of influential representatives of the institutions and civil society. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of July 2018, the official establishment act of the CF, which included Milan municipality, the south-east, south-west and north-east areas of the province, was signed. Subsequently, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February 2019, Fondazione Comunità di Milano officially introduced itself to its community and started to operate in the following focus areas: social and health care, education and training assistance; promotion of culture and historical and artistic heritage; protection and enhancement of nature and the environment. Fondazione Comunità di Milano acts according to the listening-action model. Indeed, it first gathers inputs from the community itself to understand priorities and needs and, subsequently, it addresses its resources to programs and organizations through call for proposals.

### **FONDAZIONE COMUNITARIA DI AGRIGENTO E TRAPANI**

*A community foundation born to give new hope to young people of the territory*

Located in one of the most stunning but most deprived areas of Europe, Fondazione Comunitaria di Agrigento has been established as an answer to the problematic situation of young people in the territory. It all started three years ago when the Bishop of Agrigento launched a cry of alarm, underlining the startling NEETs situation and the lack of social capital in the area. To start tackling these problems, a group, made up of 20 young people, was set to identify the long-term priorities and lines of actions for the territory. To do so, they had the chance to travel around Sicily and the whole country to get to know existing well-established organizations to learn from them and to gather interesting cues and ideas. This stimulating experience gave rise to the choice of establishing a community foundation, that encompassed not only Agrigento but also Trapani, a similar territory in several aspects. Today, Fondazione Comunitaria di Agrigento e Trapani is building its identity as a strategic partner and as a resource catalyst for the local organizations that have innovative and vital projects but are not equipped to attract and secure the necessary financial and human resources. Its lines of action are mainly three: promotion of community welfare in education and people

care, support of socially responsible businesses led by young people, and enhancement of the cultural and natural heritage of the areas in which it operates.

### **FONDAZIONE VALSESIA**

*A community foundation born to gather together and strengthen the relationships among the community itself*

The idea of creating Fondazione Valsesia was firstly proposed by Gianluca Buonanno, a local politician who wanted to enhance the sense of community among those living in Valsesia. This latter that counts approximately 60.000 people is a peculiar valley, long and narrow, located in the Piedmont Alps, and it presents different features in its economic and social fabric. After Buonanno's death, in 2016, a group of local people decided to carry on with his project, aiming at creating an organization that would represent the entire Valsesia as a whole. After three years, in March 2019, Fondazione Valsesia was officially born to be a point of reference for the numerous existing civil society organizations. Indeed, during their establishment path, Fondazione Valsesia founders realized that the main issues in the area were the lack of communication, exchange of information on projects and programs among the organizations operating in the territory, and skills in drawing the necessary funds. For this reason, Fondazione Valsesia will act as a strategic partner for the local third sector entities and a catalyst for financial and human resources.

### **MUNUS-FONDAZIONE COMUNITÀ DI PARMA**

*A community foundation born from the will of the community itself*

Munus-Fondazione Comunità di Parma was officially established in 2016 after a long exploratory process that lasted four years. Indeed, in 2012, a civic committee that included members of the community, except for public institutions, was created to understand and evaluate the interest of the community itself in giving life to a community foundation. In the beginning, Munus assets were provided by local bank origin foundation but also by 40 members of the community, among which individuals, local enterprises, diocese, and trade associations, as a testimony to their involvement and commitment. Nowadays, Munus acts as a <<philanthropic intermediary>>, whose mission is to spread the culture of giving, that gathers financial resources, mostly by supporting and advising individuals and members of the community on donor-advised funds. The community is for Munus not only the final beneficiary of its action but also a relevant player in its decision-making process: indeed, the foundation has a unique governance. Board members are appointed by those who have contributed the most to the foundation assets, the promoters of the funds that have received the highest number of donations, and the public institutions.