

Economy of Communion

a new culture

Editor's insert from Città Nuova n. 2 – 2016

EoC Report 2014-2015

42

“Do dream, dream big... because only dreams come true...”



AIPEC: the new board



The international schools 2015



AMU: new projects

**Economy of Communion
a new culture**

Newsroom insert
AIEC – International Association for an
Economy of Communion

Headquarters:
c/o Alberto Ferrucci
Piazza Borgo Pila 40/30 – 16129
Genova
Tel. 010-542011 – Fax 010-581451
CF. 90056810584
e-mail: info@edc-online.org
www.edc-online.org

Edited by:
Alberto Ferrucci, Antonella Ferrucci,
Giulio Meazzini

Concept:
AIEC

Graphics:
Layout / Panzeri – Umberto Paciarelli
English Revision - Julie Reyes

Translated by:
Eszter Kató

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The 2014/2015 EoC Report is dedicated to **Leo Andringa** who left us on 22 January 2016. Leo was an economist and a man of communion, witness of the culture of giving, a pioneer of the EoC. This is to express our infinite **thanks** to him.

The New City magazine containing the editorial insert, "Economy of Communion - a new culture" may be sent to anyone upon request to this email address: info@edc-online.org. Anyone who wishes to make a contribution to its publication or to the EoC project may send his/her donation,

specifying the specific destination and contribution to:

AIEC – International Association for an Economy of Communion

Wire Transfer: Banca Etica

BIC: CCRTIT2T84A

IBAN code:

IT85R0501801400000000123169

Entrepreneurs and workers have offered their time, expertise and resources to create new enterprises. It is a first response to the appeals of Pope Francis for an economy that does not forget the poor.

Trading the talent of communion

Alberto
Ferrucci



alberto.ferrucci@edc-online.org

The Economy of Communion has reached its 25 years milestone. In fact, it was born in 1943, from an intuition of Chiara Lubich who as a young girl got inspired by the Gospel while she was taking refuge in the shelters during the bombings: she could respond to the immense love of God for her, in the - perhaps short - lifetime she still had, pouring out her love for those around her who were frightened and insecure, and especially towards the weak, the suffering and the lonely.

Even today, unfortunately, there are people who are terrorized by bombs: the echo of their torment comes to us through the media - in the words of those who fled after losing everything - and from the beaches scattered by abandoned bodies of adults and children whose lives have been taken prematurely.

Where the rule of law has evaporated because of political and economic calculations (from which no one can opt out), the barbarity of the past centuries returns, but with the weapons of the present, those that deter modern states from repairing the damage done, because no one wants to risk their

lives for other people any more: a dead-end situation in which only a few fools would take the place of those who govern.

Can we now, just like Chiara did in 1943 and again in 1991 with the EoC, pass on the talent of communion, the only one that builds a real peace to the world? It is a talent that has been entrusted to us for the world, something we should not stick to but share. We only have a few loaves of bread and some fish, that is, our experience of "communion" in the company, in economics and in politics, open to those who suffer from the various forms of poverty: in terms of food, clothing, housing, security, trust, hope, self-esteem and above all, jobs. It is an open experience around us and towards those who, from distant people, are made our close friends

that are in the trenches, where people suffer most. With our schools, the new 1+1 projects, the network of incubators, the national associations and the already active productive projects - thanks to the profits of companies (increasing even if some of them closed down after 25 years)-, we want to overcome the emergency and, casting our eyes to far-away places by planting seeds of communion that will inevitably grow. We want to do it by training those looking for a way, or by walking alongside those who think they have already found it, in order to make the work activities they have developed concrete and sustainable. We can act to reinforce their self-esteem by increasing their trust in the future, so the desire is born in them to return the

help they received to others as soon as possible.

We will be told that only armies can reverse the situation: today the soldiers of peaceful countries help to avoid bloody wars in Iraq, in Lebanon, Kosovo, Mali, Sudan and elsewhere, but they are not sufficient to build real peace and perhaps it is not enough to pay taxes to finance armies to prevent bloody conflicts.

Similarly, it is not enough just to wait for someone to tell us what to do: like Pope Francis says, it's my turn, that of the "periphery", to notice the neediness of those around me and just like Chiara in 1943, to act, by asking the hidden partner, the Almighty, for the discernment on how to build peace by making the talents of "communion" bring fruit.



2015: a year to remember. Eleven projects running around the world
creating and reinforcing 350 work places

AMU + EoC = *work + reciprocity*

Francesco
Tortorella



francesco.tortorella@amu-it.eu

When the collaboration between EoC and AMU' intensified, about ten years ago, the "aid" provided to people in need around the world was mostly aimed at access to education and assistance for basic needs (food, medical care, housing). From the very beginning, a primary goal of the collaboration was to tackle poverty more "upstream", aiming at creating employment, opportunities of decent and stable work. It is an ambitious and complex objective that, as opposed to assistance, requires a lot of human and professional competence to manage projects and accompany the beneficiaries, also in case of a path of leadership or reciprocity. Therefore in recent years we have strengthened the project capacity of certain local organizations showing interest or affinity to the EoC, and it's proved to be a job that is paying off. In 2015 we handled 11 ongoing projects, which are creating 350 jobs, with a total investment of 500,000 Euros. In **Brazil**, on an ancient land estate worked by families who are the descendants of former African slaves, we have managed the conversion of production into organic family farming, starting fruit processing for confectionery products and handcrafts from vegetable raw materials. The business now involves about 25 families and is coordinated by the local NGO *Instituto Mundo Unido*.



Also in Brazil, we have worked on the creation of a project office inside the National Association for an Economy of Communion (ANPECOM). Training the staff, drafting the regulation and creating of a local Reciprocity Fund made it possible to launch the *Development Programme for Inclusive Companies of Communion*: a new tool to promote and strengthen enterprises that favour the economic integration of disadvantaged people. Each year the best projects will be selected, and they will be accompanied by ANPECOM experts and partially financed by the profits of the EoC businesses in the world.

In **Argentina** the first project of sustainable tourism and solidarity of the country is involving 83 families of 5 indigenous communities in what can be called an extraordinary experience of communion. With them we are upgrading housing facilities and providing the technical skills needed to accommodate tourists, improving agricultural and handicraft production, in order to get a decent income for the families involved. The project is managed by the *Fundación Comisión Católica Argentina de Migraciones*.

In **Bolivia** we have started a Microcredit Fund aimed at people who do not have access to normal bank credit. It is managed by the *Fundación UniSol* in collaboration with the local EoC commission. The project is complemented by training, advice and support to strengthen activities and to acquire the necessary management skills: to date the start-up and con-





solidation of approximately 40 micro-enterprises has been funded.

In **Paraguay** the project of strengthening small family businesses is now ending. It has been running in collaboration with the *Asociación Civil UniPar* and the local EoC commission. Through taking care of the administrative process, management training, improved equipment and facilities, and strengthening of the marketing it has been possible to achieve an improvement in the life quality of the families involved, enabling children to study and parents to take care of themselves and bring their homes to an improved state.

In **Cuba** we have assisted at the birth of the counselling cooperative named *Gestar*, which serves as an incubator for new start-ups. A first experience of incubation has been the start of a biodynamic farm.

In the **Philippines** work placement of twenty street kids continues, through the production of tapestry and high quality furniture for the domestic and international markets. About 20 young people are involved, in collaboration with the local Focolare Movement.

And then there are also the many forms of poverty in Europe, in this historical moment presented mainly through the face of the unemployed and refugees.

In **Portugal** we launched a project for work orientation, with psychological support and legal and administrative advice for starting micro-enterprises: a meeting between demand and supply of personal care services, incubation space for small craft activities, for a total of some 50 beneficiaries. The project is coordinated by the local NGO called AMU-Portugal and is running at the headquarters of the EoC business park.

In **Italy** an innovative social and employment project



has been started for 50 young people in extreme exclusion including refugees landed in Sicily without their families and some Italian young people. They will be attending training courses and work placements, accompanied by psychologists and educators and supported by a national network of families and businesses. The local manager of the project is the EoC cooperative Fo.Co., with the participation of AFN *Azione per Famiglie Nuove onlus* non-profit organization. Still in Italy, in the region of Campania, we have supported the re-training of people with addictions, in the framework of a community rehabilitation programme of social farming run by the cooperativa Demetra in collaboration with AIPEC. In Genoa, on the other hand, we are supporting the non-profit organization *Associazione Città Fraterna onlus* in their programme providing assistance to the families of those who have lost their jobs, in order to accompany them in re-training and re-employment.

Finally, during the year 2015 we funded 193 scholarships and basic assistance to 495 families in 11 countries around the world.

¹ Action for a United World Non-Profit NGO for International Cooperation and Development, www.amu-it.eu

Carolina
Carbonell

ccarbonell@argentinaclearing.com.ar

An Interview with Ramón Cerviño, pioneer of the EoC in Argentina. His lifestyle. His businesses.

Only dreams come true: *the anatomy of an EoC entrepreneur*



That Ramón Cerviño is an undisputed point of reference for the Economy of Communion in Latin America there is no doubt. Argentinean, husband of Quela and dad of five boys (one of them is in heaven), grandfather of five grandchildren, philosopher and entrepreneur in the health sector, working in the administration of social works, dealing with the management of medical services for all affiliates. In a completely different

context, he is a member of the Sushi Soul restaurant chain. He lives in Córdoba, but was born in Tucumán. Ramon was one of the pioneers of the EoC.

How to convey the essence of the EoC?

"To transmit the essence, I think it suffices to say that the EoC is not an idea (it is also an idea), it is not a school of economic thought (it is that, too), it is not ... It is a lifestyle that expresses the charisma of unity in the realities of the economy and work."

In the EoC many people participate, share, collaborate, but after all you are the EoC. One would say that it is in your DNA.

"Let's clarify: you are the one saying these things, not me. I fell in love with the Gospel as discovered and lived by Chiara Lubich. In 1980 I met Igino Giordani in the then Mariapolis Centre in Rocca di Papa. He was sitting on a bench in the garden, I approached to greet him, I explained who I was and he, raising his head, looked at me, gave me his hand and said: "Ciao Chiara". It was a shock, but I realized - not because I deserved it, but because I had been called - that I had to be Chiara, that is, someone who gives expression to



this rediscovered Gospel through his life."

What is your greatest achievement?

"Starting again every day."

And your biggest dream about the EoC?

"To do everything so that others may discover the hidden dimension of the EoC, the fourth dimension, the DNA, so that it is preserved, latent and living, until humanity is able to process the categories of thought that make it possible to develop it in mass".

What would you say to a young person?

"I would invite them to participate in a fascinating adventure, with a limitless horizon, to surf the cosmos while being submerged in the reality of every day."

Some experience on how to live the EoC inside the company?

"I would not know where to start. In our company employees are not asking for overtime, must not submit a verification of illness, the drawers don't have keys, everyone has the door key and the alarm password."

Actually, you can easily get to meet some of these em-

employees in the EoC meetings. They talk about a Ramón who cooks in the office or washes up the dishes. About one that when he has to make decisions, asks everyone.

Ramón has created several companies and has also had to close some of them down. He knows that the life of a company sometimes has to get to its end, and many times it is better this way, but the most important thing is the relationships that have been built, the communion that has been lived. That is what remains.

Sometimes he even had to lay off an employee. In these cases he felt the executor of a decision taken collectively. When a person goes away, it's not because they are no longer needed in the company, but because the company is no longer needed for them.

He is a great reader, too, it is not unusual to see him carrying a lot of books. He has two favourite ones, he opens these at the end of a meeting to give a few sentences that then remain in one's head and heart: Luigino Bruni - *La ferita dell'altro* ("The Other's Wound"; Il Margine), and Monica Caudana - *C'è un'altro mondo* (There Is Another World, Ciudad Nueva). He often quotes this paragraph, which is one of his favourites: *"Good policy is the one that knows how to mediate reciprocity but without preventing, for fear, that people meet, otherwise you lose «the embrace» of the other. And without hugs you die! We cannot allow that the fear of wounds should prevent us from getting this embrace, even if we have to risk a mortal wound, because the only blessing that makes human life worth living emerges from that open wound caused by the other, and from the one that we cause to someone else."*

Ramón is one of those people who, in the words of Eduardo Galeano, "burn in life with such great force that you cannot watch them without blinking, and whoever approaches them catches fire, too."

Do dream, dream big... because only dreams come true... (Ramón)



811 EoC companies: a balance

The 500 entrepreneurs who accepted the invitation of Chiara to create businesses of communion in the early nineties, today, after 25 years, are mostly reaching the age of retirement. Well, those of them who are still active: their companies, navigating the rough seas of seven years of global crisis are in many cases now managed by their children, with their respective business and personal goals and visions.

If the majority of adherent companies were only based on those early entrepreneurs, by now the Economy of Communion would be a great experience of the past; but others have joined, shared their profits, even if received from a small number of companies, and they continued to grow and send us beautiful experiences of communion from various parts of the world.

Our American entrepreneurs who years ago had created a web site called B2B (business to business) to facilitate acquaintance and communication between companies on an international level, have now set up a new site, www.eoc-companies.org that enables companies not only to join to get in contact with others in their territory through local commissions, but also to confirm their membership and communicate their willingness to pool their talents to develop other businesses. Through this site, 355 companies have already reconfirmed their membership and many have also listed their professional skills and technologies that they are ready to share with others.

In light of a recent census, there are 811 businesses that value and live the EoC spirit: 263 of these are active in Italy, 200 in the rest of Europe, 220 in Latin America, 84 in Africa (these doubled since the last count), 26 in North America and 18 in Asia.

So after 25 years there is a hard core of entrepreneurs who continue to experience a new way of living the economy, certain that in this world, which is getting more and more wounded by the "side effects" of the liberist economy, this is the most concrete contribution they can offer, as well as making their resources and talents available, to accompany the enthusiasm and determination of the young entrepreneurs who, thanks to the nascent worldwide network of incubators, will give birth to the future generation of EoC companies.

Alberto Ferrucci



Despite the global crisis, the profits offered to the poor and the formation of new men by the EoC companies increased by 28%

Shared Profits

Gian Maria
Bidone



gianmaria.bidone@fastwebnet.it

The earnings shared by companies in 2015 amounted to EUR 1,613,345, of which EUR 1,169,640 were deposited to the Economy of Communion, while EUR 443,705 were offered in the form of benefits in kind or spent on the poor or training within each company or in its surrounding region. The profits paid to EoC increased by 28% comparing to the previous year. In addition, entrepreneur members of the Italian AIPEC Association have already paid EUR 115,000 worth of profits to AMU for new projects of 2015-2016, and this amount is 25% greater than what the same group shared in the previous year.

50% of the profits of companies were dedicated to the poor as well as all the contribution of those who participate in the project but are not entrepreneurs, amounting to EUR 404,943 this year; therefore the resources available for emergency aid and projects for the poor in this fiscal year amounted to EUR 989,763.

27% of allocated aid was directed to the costs of food, 21% for medical expenses, 13% for housing costs, 25% for schooling and 14% to create jobs. The latter amount has doubled compared to the previous year and the resources not yet allocated will help expand this latter item.

Two-thirds of the amounts in the column "shared gains in kind or used for other destinations" correspond to expenses incurred by businesses with purposes of solidarity (internships for young people eager to experience work in these companies, support for persons with reduced capacities, etc.) and one-third is dedicated to solidarity actions by the company in its own region.

The number of families receiving emergency aid was reduced by about 30 units, a modest but important sign that speaks of families that managed to leave poverty behind.

Part of the resources devoted to job creation has been entrusted to local associations of EoC entrepreneurs, whose experts are committed to identifying the - locally - most appropriate ways to design, evaluate, finance and follow entrepreneurial projects, particularly by young people

oriented towards the EoC values.

As regards training resources, the disbursement of funding of the Sophia University Institute of Loppiano has been confirmed and the resources for the formation of the younger generation in the Summer Schools have tripled. This year's courses will be held in Douala (Cameroon), Nairobi (Kenya), Prague (Czech Republic) and São Paulo (Brazil), with the participation of about 400 young people. These schools have yielded a growing aspiration of young people to "do business", which is a development of fundamental importance, and a particular commitment with innovative interventions will be dedicated to it in the future.



| Country | Profits and contributions dedicated to communion (in Euro) | | | | Aid allocated to the support of the Poor | | | | | | Aid allocated to the training of New People | | | |
|--|--|---|-----------|------------------------|--|------------------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|---|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|
| | Profits shared by businesses | | | Personal contributions | from the 50% of the profits directed to the EoC + personal contributions | | | | | € 989,763 | from the 50% of the profits | | | € 584,820 |
| | Directed to EoC for the Poor and for Training | Directed to other destinations or given in kind | Total | | Food | Medical Expenses | Housing | School | Work | Total | EoC Travels and Schools | Support for local EoC facilities | Support for Training Centers | Total |
| Italy | 129,691 | 143,760 | 273,451 | 139,560 | 10,560 | 5,600 | 7,680 | 3,368 | 22,150 | 49,358 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Belgium | 317,969 | 45,531 | 363,500 | 9,912 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| France | 32,266 | 0 | 32,266 | 17,506 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Great Britain | 365 | 0 | 365 | 7,837 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ireland | 1,300 | 0 | 1,300 | 1,049 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Holland Denmark Sweden Norway | 3,593 | 0 | 3,593 | 4,094 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Portugal | 3,200 | 64,600 | 67,800 | 4,836 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 34,642 | 34,642 | 0 | 10,000 | 0 | 10,000 |
| Spain | 8,491 | 0 | 8,491 | 17,043 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Austria | 7,858 | 0 | 7,858 | 10,269 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Germany | 24,800 | 0 | 24,800 | 18,721 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Switzerland | 52,878 | 0 | 52,878 | 61,417 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| the Baltic States | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 944 | 280 | 680 | 0 | 0 | 1,904 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Poland | 4,930 | 0 | 4,930 | 1,670 | 2,720 | 1,600 | 4,400 | 2,160 | 0 | 10,880 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Czech Republic | 37,956 | 0 | 37,956 | 4,278 | 638 | 138 | 1,862 | 784 | 0 | 3,422 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Russia | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,560 | 2,640 | 1,840 | 480 | 0 | 7,520 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Slovakia | 1,500 | 1,170 | 2,670 | 5,876 | 6,576 | 480 | 960 | 1,248 | 0 | 9,264 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Slovenia | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Croatia Macedonia Serbia Romania | 3,485 | 10,115 | 13,600 | 3,172 | 44,560 | 9,008 | 19,632 | 42,496 | 0 | 115,696 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hungary | 12,825 | 0 | 12,825 | 777 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Egypt | 9,585 | 0 | 9,585 | 0 | 0 | 1,760 | 0 | 3,200 | 0 | 4,960 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Israel - Palestine | 0 | 0 | 0 | 699 | 480 | 6,240 | 2,080 | 400 | 0 | 9,200 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Jordan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,500 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Lebanon | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8,178 | 2,586 | 3,698 | 0 | 1,000 | 15,462 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Maghreb | 2,315 | 0 | 2,315 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Turkey | 0 | 0 | 0 | 500 | 0 | 1,376 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,376 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| East Africa | 300 | 0 | 300 | 620 | 3,160 | 2,320 | 1,960 | 160 | 0 | 7,600 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Central Africa | 152 | 0 | 152 | 0 | 3,024 | 1,816 | 3,040 | 0 | 0 | 7,880 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| West Africa | 1,524 | 0 | 1,524 | 327 | 1,084 | 4,064 | 2,704 | 3,976 | 600 | 12,428 | 800 | 0 | 0 | 800 |
| South Africa | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,600 | 1,320 | 400 | 1,000 | 0 | 4,320 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Congo | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,800 | 12,800 | 4,800 | 8,360 | 40,000 | 70,760 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Madagascar | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 280 | 240 | 120 | 960 | 0 | 1,600 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Thailand | 1,316 | 0 | 1,316 | 1,835 | 0 | 720 | 0 | 9,040 | 0 | 9,760 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| South Korea | 166,928 | 0 | 166,928 | 20,323 | 4,800 | 1,440 | 0 | 7,200 | 0 | 13,440 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Philippines | 98,017 | 0 | 98,017 | 7,159 | 13,505 | 10,845 | 4,415 | 28,957 | 7,350 | 65,072 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Japan | 345 | 0 | 345 | 5,469 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hong Kong | 1,000 | 0 | 1,000 | 6,820 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| India | 0 | 0 | 0 | 175 | 1,123 | 848 | 2,970 | 3,639 | 0 | 8,580 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Indonesia | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,536 | 416 | 1,248 | 2,288 | 0 | 7,488 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Canada | 34,442 | 0 | 34,442 | 205 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Oceania | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7,307 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| USA | 8,992 | 102,000 | 110,992 | 4,945 | 560 | 2,528 | 0 | 1,200 | 0 | 4,288 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mexico Costa Rica Panama | 7,518 | 0 | 7,518 | 0 | 10,912 | 9,176 | 2,128 | 7,084 | 910 | 30,210 | 14,050 | 2,950 | 0 | 17,000 |
| Colombia - Venezuela | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8,504 | 2,776 | 1,280 | 9,328 | 0 | 21,888 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Peru Ecuador Bolivia | 270 | 0 | 270 | 0 | 3,600 | 900 | 1,500 | 2,800 | 0 | 8,800 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Argentina Chile Uruguay Paraguay | 81,633 | 73,479 | 155,112 | 0 | 19,099 | 27,092 | 19,996 | 16,764 | 0 | 82,951 | 0 | 4,800 | 0 | 4,800 |
| Brazil | 53,292 | 3,050 | 56,342 | 22,554 | 55,772 | 51,679 | 10,493 | 39,624 | 7,750 | 165,318 | 2,333 | 18,157 | 6,255 | 26,745 |
| Leftover from previous years + miscellaneous | 58,903 | 0 | 58,903 | 12,487 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sophia University Institute | | | | | | | | | | | | | 200,000 | 200,000 |
| International Schools and Congresses | | | | | | | | | | | 55,000 | | | 55,000 |
| Newsletters and Website | | | | | | | | | | | | 42,000 | | 42,000 |
| Administration | | | | | | | | | | | 5,000 | 30,800 | | 35,800 |
| To assign | | | | | | | | | | 203,696 | | | | 192,675 |
| Total | 1,169,640 | 443,705 | 1,613,345 | 404,943 | 212,575 | 162,688 | 99,886 | 196,516 | 114,402 | 989,763 | 77,183 | 108,707 | 206,255 | 584,820 |

Experienced entrepreneurs join young people to encourage the emergence of new companies on the African Continent. Festive atmosphere and inter-company collaboration

One company is not enough: *the Promise of Nairobi*

Trees
Verhegge



trees.verhegge@skynet.be

During the 2015 EoC Congress in Nairobi many entrepreneurs present, including Koen and his wife Lieve, had the opportunity to meet young African participants at the school that preceded the congress. These young people, some of whom arrived after a several-day-long journey, had a strong desire to realize their entrepreneurial dreams, and rejoiced to see how the seeds of a new economy can flourish, even if planted in a slightly polluted soil suffering the side effects of liberal economy.

Koen had been able to read their dreams of aspiring young entrepreneurs, written on pieces of paper pinned to a board. Like other "experienced entrepreneurs," he added his business card to those slips and offered to help in the implementation of the projects. At that time it was impossible to see who was giving and who was receiving, everything was filled with love and to each came a hundredfold.

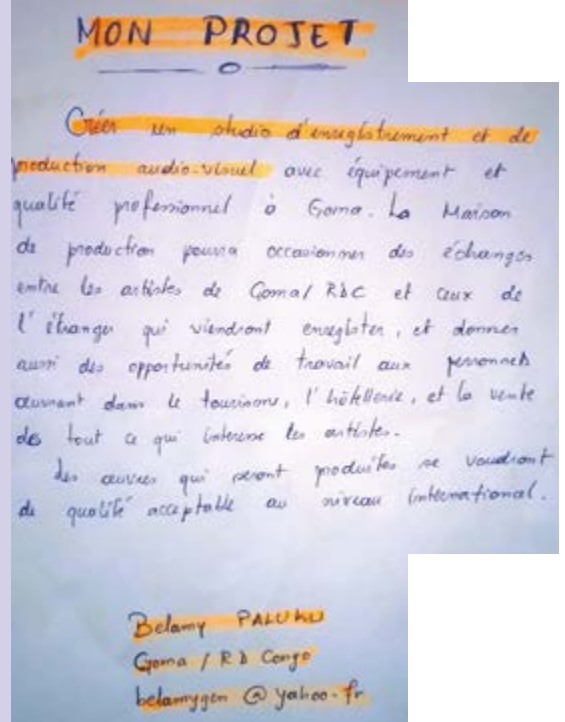
In an explosion of colour, African clothes and others, white faces and others, it was clear that for this type of entrepreneurs "one company is not enough", so everyone rushed to sign the pact: "I promise to dedicate my life as an apos-

tle of the Economy of Communion and so make my contribution in the most just and fraternal way possible so that the greatest dream of Chiara may come true: «That all may be one»."

Belgian entrepreneur Koen Vanreusel founded Batiself, (now Easykit), which is a company offering assisted service for "do it yourself" projects in the areas of plumbing and heating. A year ago, he helped Serbian engineer Atilla create an EoC company named Easykit Serbia in his own sector in the city of Novi Sad. In Nairobi Koen had pinned his business card on the project description of Belamy Paluku, a young musician and singer from Goma, Congo.

Together with other young people Belamy had created a band years before to animate the events of the Focolare Movement in Goma and in other cities. In 2011 he collaborated at the launch of the cultural centre "Foyer culturel de Goma", in a co-operation between Belgium and the Republic of Congo. The centre offers artistic training for 300 young people in the sectors of music, dance and theatre, and it organises a concert every Saturday, attended by 4,000 people on average, during which positive messages are conveyed,





economic plan, what had been achieved and what they thought of developing in the spirit of the Economy of Communion. As they were planning a trip to Rwanda for a wedding, Koen and Lieve informed Belamy and his friends in Goma that they could meet in Gisenyi, a town

pointing towards tolerance and the common good.

Belamy is the artistic director and in 2013 he decided to become a professional singer, organizing concerts and signing contracts. During the Nairobi conference he felt the burning desire to start a music production house called "Belazik", starting from a recording studio for songs and video production, to move to the commercialization of music, in the spirit of the EoC.

As he was sure that culture and music are important elements for the maturation of a company, Koen became interested in the project, pledging to work together to realise it together with Belamy and his future partner Samy.

Two more congress participants, Frédérique and Nathalie Dupont from Northern France had expressed interest in Belamy's project. After their return to Belgium, Koen and Lieve visited them: after a good day together, the four wrote to Belamy to be updated on the status of the project, adding questions to help define the economic and financial outline of the future company.

Belamy and Samy responded right away, in a precise and serious manner, to tell about their

near Goma.

Three meetings were held with Belamy, Samy and other young people present at the conference in Nairobi: one in Gisenyi and two in Kigali. These were moments of intense work: the participants were very excited, they learned how to prepare a quotation, how to define the "mission statement" of their business, and so on.

There was also time to listen, ask questions and get a taste of the culture of the other, always in the spirit of the Economy of Communion, and there was a festive atmosphere in the moment of saying good-bye, with the promise of preparing the company's budget by January 2016.

Convinced by the seriousness of the project, Koen and Lieve, together with Frédérique and Nathalie, said that they were willing to participate in investments for various projects, collaborating in various ways: they will also be present at the inauguration of the enterprise. Young people of Congo are already dreaming of an EoC business park in Goma, one that would be born from the close collaboration between the five small EoC companies present here.

Where new EoC entrepreneurs are born

International *summer schools 2015*

Antonella
Ferrucci



info@edc-online.org

For some years now, as a fundamental part of the EoC "youth project", International EoC Schools are held around the world. Although different from each other, the schools inevitably turn out to be places where true vocations to the Economy of Communion and new EoC entrepreneurs are born. It could be for the places that serve as their venues (the Little Towns of Focolare) or for the care with which they are planned and run, but it is a fact that they create a unique atmosphere that leaves young people, once back at home, with the desire to live for something great and gives them the certainty of not being alone in dreaming about a different world. The faces of the young participants you can see on this page will easily confirm it.

We have already written about the EoC School held in **Nairobi** in May in the previous EoC insert in July 2015. Now we tell you about the summer schools.

Prague (Czech Republic), 24-28/08/2015: *Let's create our future! It is in our hands!*

65 young people from 16 different countries attended the fourth European EoC Summer School (after Lisbon, Madrid and Paris) held at the Mariapolis Centre in Vinor, near Prague. For the first time there were young participants from Russia and South Korea, and Eastern European countries were very well represented by young people from Ukraine, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia, Macedonia and Albania. 60% of the young people had not known the EoC, many came using the grants provided by a European project: for most of them the EoC was a fascinating discovery. Only two echoes: "I spent the best week of my life here: if someone had told me before that I was going to have this experience, I would not have believed them"; "I was not one of you before, but now maybe I am."

Vargem Grande Paulista – SP (Brazil), 26-30/10/2015: *Connecting dreams, spreading a new culture*

The Mariapolis Ginetta welcomed 50 young people from Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico and Cuba, accompanied by a dozen entrepreneurs. There were two important instances: one of them was the visit to San Paolo, dis-



covering the inequalities that moved Chiara Lubich in '91. It began with a tour of the elegant streets of the city and continued with a visit to the children of the Afago social work and a possibility to watch the "bomb" video of Chiara with the launch of the EoC in the same room where everything happened in 1991. Shortly after, Armando Tortelli, a "pioneer" of the first generation of EoC entrepreneurs, announced the availability of the entrepreneurs present for the young people to be followed individually, accompanying them in the realization of their dream, in what has been called "operazione uno per uno (operation one for one)". The overflow of emotion was palpable in the room. Upon the delivery of the certificates, each young person recounted their dream by calling the entrepreneur whom they wished to ask to follow them. The strong impression is that in Latin America there is now a second generation of EoC that runs parallel to the first.

Learn more : www.edc-online.org/en/study-with-us.html

The strength of the young people combined with the skills of our entrepreneurs

A great project for our 25th anniversary: The "Global Network of EoC Incubators"

The idea was originated by the strong suggestion and desire of young people. During the last International Summer Schools (only in the last two years we have had five of them), we have been impressed by the strength of young people who want to create an EoC company, some with well-matured and elaborate plans, others as a vocation but without having specifically established their own project. It was obvious that we had to follow them and support them. But how? When we met with the International Commission last February, it seemed necessary to mobilise the skills of our entrepreneurs worldwide as a first step. But perhaps we also needed some structure to coordinate the initiatives... We proposed two first steps that were launched in Nairobi. The first is the **François Neveux Project** (or Operation One for One in Latin America), to connect young project developers with the entrepreneurs of the first generation. We can vividly remember those intense moments in Nairobi or at the end of the school in Brazil when the entrepreneurs present committed to embrace the "dreams" of young people and accompany them as their elder brothers.

It is to offer young people first of all a deep listening, trust and real support that is continued over time, even before procuring funding or advice, so that they have the strength to go through the difficulties that will inevitably occur along the journey of creation and launch of a new business.

The second element was the organization of **temporary incubators** for 15 days to help young people in the maturation of their project. One of the incubators is for the Lionello Business Park (Loppiano) and another one is for Africa. An incubator is an accompanying structure that offers training projects and resources (information, advice, contacts, access to various programmes...) to project owners, helping them define their project better and then seek funding.

At the Loppiano Lab and later during the inter-American school in Brazil it was clear that real permanent EoC incubators are needed, and that many necessary skills already exist in the world: we just have to create a network for all existing initiatives or those that are developing. It was



clear that **2016 would be the year of the EoC incubators!** A work meeting is scheduled for next March to take stock of needs and resources, and devise together the coordination structure that will offer support to local incubators by helping to share resources. Meanwhile, since last December Florencia Locascio, a young Argentinean professional has been at the Lionello Bonfanti Business Park: hers is the task of studying best practices of this field in the world and helping to implement the project.

The goal with this **worldwide network of EoC incubators** is primarily to accompany a new generation of EoC entrepreneurs by fostering the creation of new businesses and so giving a new launch to the entire EoC. Another goal is to set the energies and skills of everyone in motion, helping to form a large worldwide EoC network in which the first and second generation can work together to spread the culture of giving to the ends of the world.

Anouk Grevin



anouk.grevin@univ-nantes.fr

For an EoC that is attentive to projects that help those on the periphery

Mauro
Ventura



mauro.ventura1971@gmail.com

«AIPEC is a beautiful thing and I would like it to spread. I decided to join to build an economy in a joint effort that should be based on the values of respect, assistance and the exchange of energies, and where money is only a means and not an end, a way for everyone to have a better life». This is what Francesca, a 40-year-old Turin lawyer writes. She is committed to defending the rights of the weakest, after having met the Italian Association for an Economy of Communion (AIPEC). She did not hesitate to sign up: after reading the Statute and the Code of Ethics on www.aipec.it, she went on to deepen her knowledge about the Economy of Communion also thanks to www.edc-online.org and in the end she joined us with much enthusiasm.

Like her, another 200 entrepreneurs, professionals, students, pensioners, employees, housewives and people seeking employment have joined AIPEC. Many more are those who rediscovered values already existing but maybe dormant in themselves during the 80 events organized in the first three years: "It opens my heart to hope knowing that there are organisations that are actually free from narrow self-interest, the passion of possession and are animated by a consideration for "the other", by a spirit of service to achieve the common good."

In November 2015 the assembly of AIPEC elected six new Board members. **Livio Bertola** was confirmed as President: he is an entrepreneur from Cuneo, father of four children and grandfather of 7 grandchildren, a leader capable of engaging those who approach him in just a few minutes. **Ornella Seca** was re-elected Vice-President: she is a gen-

eral agent of an insurance company, with 5 offices in the central/southern part of the region of Abruzzo, bringing together rationality and efficiency in a great love for the EoC. Newcomers are **Annalisa Mancini**, electronics engineer, who will give an international aspect to the Association as she works in Germany; **Enrica Bruneri**, director of a family business of machining in Piedmont; **Mauro Ventura**, financial consultant and pianist, who thanks to AIPEC has rediscovered the enthusiasm of '91 at the launch of the EoC; finally, **Nicola Pagliarulo** from Rome, an electrical engineer who, after 20 years of work has now created his own information services company. **Domenico Racca**, a member of the previous Board, was elected by the members as 'guarantor' of the Association.

AIPEC's ambitions and hopes are high for the association's growth in the next three years and especially for projects to be financed through part of the profits that the entrepreneur members provide. On the one hand, therefore, we can report the structuring and consolidation of the organization for its efforts to spread the EoC, the other, a generous and careful management of projects dedicated to "those left to be the last ones".

The spreading of the EoC is a process also involving collaboration with the Scuola di Economia Civile (SEC) and Sophia University, while the solidarity and cooperation projects are managed in collaboration with AMU, in the knowledge that such projects are an integral part of the economic behaviour of the enterprises involved.



25 years from its first launch, communion is not only a requirement of justice, but a necessity

The EoC is for the poor

Luigino
Bruni

Thank God, the EoC has reached its 25th birthday. It is an important achievement. We all hoped for it in 1991, but today we know that Chiara Lubich's intuition-inspiration has been generative, it has borne fruit and it has been very fruitful. In 1991 I was a recent graduate in economics, and I embraced Chiara's proposal with immense enthusiasm. Back then, I did not think that a few years later (in 1998) she would have called me to help give "scientific dignity" to her dream.

How do we enter this new phase of the EoC? Today we are a movement made up of various organisations. In the front row there are always the entrepreneurs who continue to believe in the project, donate profits to spread it in all possible ways. So in this "silver wedding anniversary" the first thanks must go to them for their generosity, faith, perseverance and love. Together with the entrepreneurs a movement has developed over the years made up by

people, students, scholars, citizens, associations, business parks, development projects, a university (Sophia) and thousands of initiatives of communion worldwide.

But as we grow and we live I can never forget the many times Chiara would tell me: "Keep studying the EoC and doing many things, but never forget that I have created the EoC for the poor." These are words that have always stayed with me in recent years, and guided my steps, mind and heart. Because of this I cannot but rejoice to see that in recent years the EoC has been particularly developed in the regions with the highest concentration of poverty, including Africa and some parts of Central and South America. We all must, however, do more so as to avoid that the means (donate profits

and help create new businesses) become the end, forgetting or leaving too much of the goal (showing a part of the world without misery and destitution) in the background.

It is important, therefore, that on this twenty-fifth anniversary we place poverty and its challenges back at the centre of our efforts and enthusiasm. In our words, and before that in our heart.

This way we shall be able to take every opportunity to present the EoC at all levels again. Especially to young people, those who were born and raised after the first launch in 1991. But not only to them: this anniversary should re-launch a "missionary" season, shouting our ideal from the rooftops. Our time is particularly suitable to understand the Economy of Communion. Many signs - the environment, terrorism, the economic and financial crises, the increase of inequality... -

they all say to us and to many that the economic model that capitalism has set up in this century is no longer able to secure a future for the planet and those who are excluded. Communion is not only a requirement of justice but a necessity. But we must have the strength and the courage to say it, with competence and passion - and above all we must present an EoC that has grown, matured and partly changed in all these years. In 2016, we must present and live an EoC that is all similar and all new to that of 1991: the same radicalism and the same DNA, but merged in the humanity today that is awaiting it. Happy birthday to all, to the pioneers, to newcomers, to everyone who loves and lives an Economy of Communion.



l.bruni@lumsa.it





FORM, FOR ME, FOR YOU

di Vittorio Sadini

36

YOUR PROJECT SOUNDS GREAT,
BUT HAVE YOU GOT AN IDEA
ABOUT HOW TO REALISE IT?



YOU ARE RIGHT...THE PROBLEM IS
THAT WE, THE YOUNG HAVE
NO EXPERIENCE AND THE BANKS...
THEY JUST DON'T TRUST US!



MAAAIL!



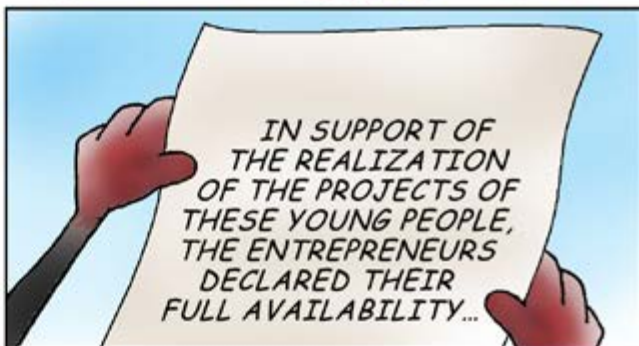
FANTASTIC! IT'S THE NEWS
FROM THE NAIROBI
CONGRESS!



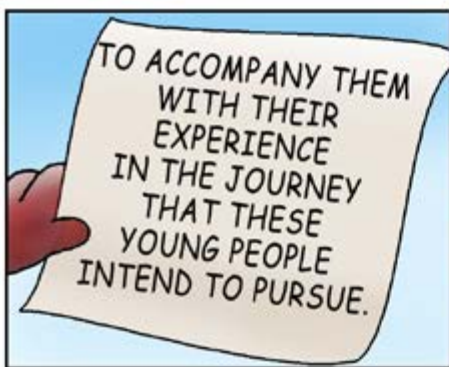
LISTEN, LISTEN PEOPLE!
THEY ARE GETTING DOWN
TO SERIOUS BUSINESS!



IN SUPPORT OF
THE REALIZATION
OF THE PROJECTS OF
THESE YOUNG PEOPLE,
THE ENTREPRENEURS
DECLARED THEIR
FULL AVAILABILITY...



TO ACCOMPANY THEM
WITH THEIR
EXPERIENCE
IN THE JOURNEY
THAT THESE
YOUNG PEOPLE
INTEND TO PURSUE.



YOU GO,
GUYS!

HERE WE GO
NOW!

