

Economy of Communion

a new culture

Editor's insert from Città Nuova n. 2 – 2017

44

EoC Report 2016



First Steps
in Russia



AIPEC:
Earthquake Relief



The Challenge of
Polo Spartaco

**Economy of Communion
a new culture**

Editorial Insert

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To keep **Leo Andringa's** memory alive, who was among the first ones to grasp the delicacy of the distribution process of aid to the needy, the EoC has decided to dedicate the newly-formed "**Observatory on Poverty**" (**Osservatorio sulla povertà; OPLA**) with its headquarters at the Lionello

Business Park, to him. The goal of OPLA, directed by Licia Paglione, is to collect the "best practices" (in and outside of the EoC) in fighting poverty, by developing an approach inspired by the values of communion and reciprocity.

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Entrepreneurs, workers and scholars from 49 countries are meeting in Rome to offer Pope Francis the modest but suffered result of twenty-five years of counter-current efforts to develop a productive communion open to the excluded.

Our Five Loaves and Two Fish

ALBERTO
FERRUCCI



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This report of the year 2016 is being published in the days when the operators of the Economy of Communion from all over the world gather in Rome to meet Pope Francis. They will have the opportunity to offer the following things to the Holy Father: the operational business parks in Europe and Latin America, the life of communion of the workers of more than eight hundred companies, the support provided to thousands of poor people, schooling for their children, the associations that organise trainings and support networks for new companies and young entrepreneurs, the productive and social projects as well as the support for the university of the culture of unity and the dialogue with contemporary culture.

It may seem little compared to the complexity of today's problems, especially if offered in the more authoritative category of the future of society and the environment of the planet. Anyhow, they are our "five loaves and two fish", which we hope will be made precious by the faces of all those who come to the meeting with the pope, with the light of the charisma of Unity in their eyes, God's gift en-

trusted to Chiara Lubich under the bombs of the Second World War.

Twenty-five years ago, seeing the scandal of the favelas around the skyscrapers of Sao Paulo, as an alternative to triumphant consumerism after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, Chiara suggested a "productive communion" that's inclusive of those who are underprivileged, calling us to unite to produce a new kind of wealth and help the poor move from their condition.

All this happened just as the globalization of capital and labour was spreading, which should have redeemed two billion people from poverty, but instead allowed the big economic and financial groups, benefitting from

the lack of rules, to evade taxes on their huge profits; taxes that should have financed the research and innovation of the states, needed to create new jobs to replace those traditional ones that were wiped out.

Wealth stolen from the common good that is accumulated by groups that are so powerful now that they are difficult to control. That's how "structures of sin" have been consolidated that concentrate wealth in the hands of few people and cause difficulties to many, leading them to listen to those who blame the situation on the poorest of the poor, those who are deprived of not only goods

but also their homeland, posing some heavy questions to us in their despair in the streets of our cities every day.

Therefore our prospects seem to be of a world in which walls are erected and confidence is collapsed, which is the opposite of the United World that Chiara proposed indicating the way with the Economy of Communion, the world that Pope Francis tries to build showing a merciful God looking at all the inhabitants of this small planet wandering through space, on which we survive breathing in the atmosphere that wraps it in a very thin layer.



EoC and AMU: the impact of the projects implemented in 2016 from the profits offered for communion by the companies

Argentina and Italy: *Development, Freedom & Reciprocity*

FRANCESCO
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Also in 2016, the collaboration between the EoC and AMU¹ aimed to create jobs, to offer many people the opportunity to not depend on "aid", but make a living through their own capabilities.

During the year, some projects have reached their conclusion: in **Bolivia** (micro-credit), **Paraguay** (family micro-enterprises), the **Philippines** (employment of former street children) and Italy (vocational training for former drug addicts and assistance to the unemployed). Through these projects, 100 people have jobs today, employing their skills and earning a living for their families.

The activities of other ongoing projects have also been continued: in **Brazil** (family organic farming and the launch of inclusive micro-enterprises), **Argentina** (rural and community based crafts and tourism), **Cuba** (incubation of micro-enterprises), **Portugal** (re-employment of unemployed people) and **Italy** (employment of young Italians and immigrants), with 250 workers involved. Let's see two of these projects in more detail.

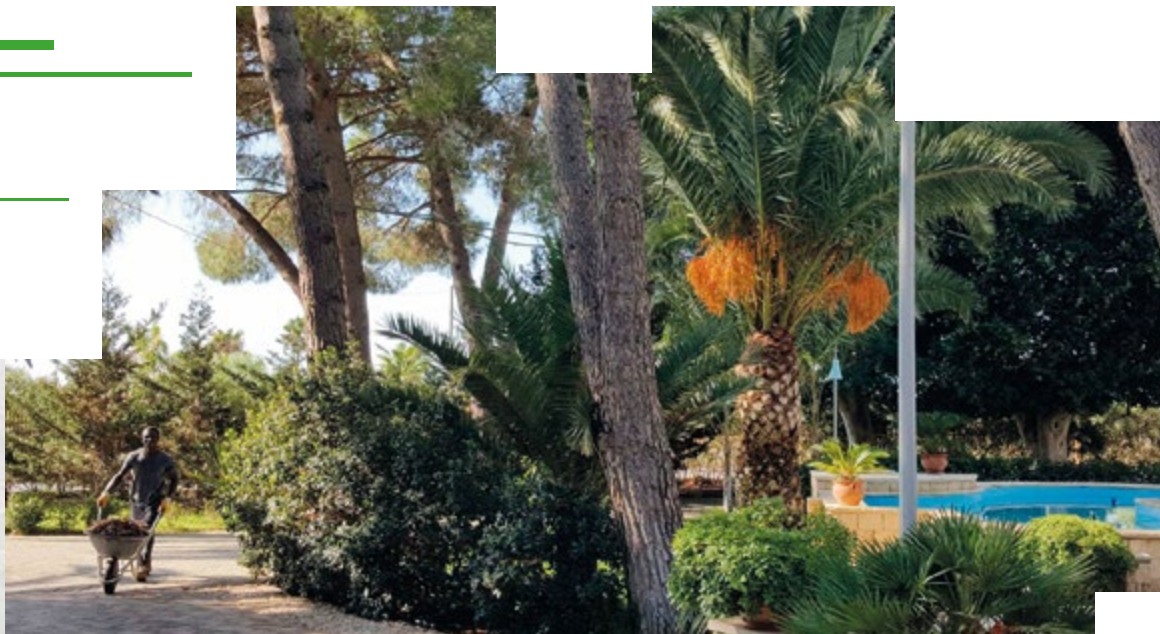
Argentina. 5 rural communities, 83 families and 32 micro-enterprises got involved in creating a network of artisans, farmers, breeders and tour operators: the first experiment in sustainable and responsible tourism in the country. The project is improving the infrastructure, the professional skills of those involved and the quality of the products. But there is a human development invisible to the eyes that the "solidarity tourist" perceives by experiencing a few days with those involved and by entering in their lives: the self-confidence of those people that, feeling inferior, used to lower their heads and keep silent; the self-esteem of these new small business owners, now more aware of their dignity and capacity; civic development, the stability of families and the attention paid to the "common home". Being able to practice and share their skills at work,



the potential of these people has been released as their relationships with others have changed. Norma explains: "I used to think my value came "from outside", that it depended on what others thought because I was a bit discriminated among my friends: I was black, indigenous and poor. Today I believe that we must learn to value ourselves, without expecting it to come from outside: I know my value and because of this I look at others in a different way."

In these areas that are far from everything the need for a job drives many young people to emigrate. They often end up in the slums of the big cities, being discriminated, with no opportunity of access to employment, trapped by drugs and crime or as victims of trafficking. Renzo is a crafts-





man; he lives here with his wife and their three small children, working the cactus wood, which is a light, durable, easy-to-model and abundantly available natural resource: "There are young people who do not know what to do and leave for other provinces or other countries. There are young people who cannot use the things that they have; they do not know what to do here. But we can stay, we really have everything here. For me to be able to stay here is a great opportunity." Gratitude for the opportunity to remain in their own region inspires Renzo to give something of his own to other young people so that they too can do the same: he offers free craft classes on the working of cactus wood and animates a network of local craftsmen urging them for constant improvement.

Italy. M. has a deep-reaching look and a sweet smile. You would not believe that his smile is quite a miracle: he is from Syracuse (Sicily), eighteen years old, has lived most of his life hidden in his mother's house, for fear of being taken away by social services. He seems to have discovered the right to exist lately: he is happy to have been discovered by the police who found him growing marijuana at home. Now he is released on ticket of leave (being followed and supervised) but since his arrest he has begun "a new life". While he is telling his story he keeps looking at Gianvito with an expression of deep esteem for him on his face – he is the president of the agricultural cooperative where he now works as a gardener. He uses aeroponics, a type of greenhouse cultivation tech-

nique without the use of soil, which gave him great results with marijuana: now he can put it to good use for the common good and without having to hide.

M. is one of fifty boys in Sicily who are learning a craft through apprenticeships, employment grants and training courses, through the project "Fare sistema oltre l'accoglienza" ("Systematic insertion, not just welcome").

H. from Nigeria is also one of them, doing an internship as a storekeeper at Claudio's company. The entrepreneur says that now he is his right hand and he would like to hire him as soon as possible because "this guy is just so good." There is also N., aged nineteen, from Ghana, smiling while pushing the wheelbarrow and tending the garden of a famous meeting facility: the owner shows photos of the nice August day they had at the beach with him and all the other employees. By now he has become one of the family.

Now the vocational training for young people has finished, the second phase of the project is about to open: social and work insertion in Sicily and other regions. Businesses and families are sought throughout Italy that would be willing to accompany their integration towards individual autonomy. Some of them have already started: it is an experience that leaves a mark on the lives of those who welcome and accept others and those who are welcome and accepted.

¹ Azione per un Mondo Unito onlus (Action for a United World Non-Profit NGO for International Cooperation and Development) , www.amu-it.eu

Business Park *in the Pampas*

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MARDON



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EoC and Mariapolis Lia

Located at the Mariapolis Lia near the Argentinean EoC Business Park Solidaridad, the sweet producing company "Sorriso" has been providing work and food for many years for the young focolarine undertaking a training course at the Mariapolis. In recent months the organizational needs resulting from a major and unexpected order have highlighted how precarious the systems of management, manufacturing and marketing are comparing to the development prospects that are now reality: there is a need for change. This is how six months ago a managerial reorganization process was run with the participation of the focolarine and the Locascio family, representing the EoC Association of the Southern Cone, which has made available their entrepreneurial skills to help reorganize the company. How? By working together, with great freedom and openness, sharing needs, doubts and failures. There were months of intense work in which, starting from a general analysis of the industry, a three-year project was designed. The fruits were immediately visible: reduced costs, increased profitability and improved trade relations with key customers. Through the creation of management indicators, a building renovation was started and new machinery were installed. "Putting the needs, concerns and doubts of those working in this sector in communion with the EoC entrepreneurs led us to starting a new phase in the history of the Mariapolis." And it is only the beginning of a great challenge of strong communion.

Pasticcino

Meanwhile, the Solidaridad Business Park keeps growing: in 2016 Pasticcino continued to innovate, create and reinvent. Its achievements include: the enlargement of the hangar doubling its floorspace by a new wing, the launch of new products, the arrival of new clients, the increase of the staff, the increase in production, its re-activation on the web and constant presence in social media... and also



the new headquarters opened in Spartacus Business Park in Brazil as reported on page 12. All this would not have been possible without the 360° of communion that's a constant characteristic of those who are part of Pasticcino: with generosity, a contagious daily enthusiasm and a priority relationship with the customers and all those who approach the company.

Primicias

After last year's floods that inundated the crops of Primicias, Pepe Marin was able to start over based on the aid received from the EoC worldwide, with the soul of a farmer who knows that the earth that's always generous will offer him a redress. Today, production has begun.

Visitors

The "Polo" always has an open gate: during the year 2016 more than 2,500 people visited it. Students, teachers, entrepreneurs, travellers and the visitors to the Mariapolis Lia. What matters to everyone is not so much "how you get there", but "how you leave": surprised, "challenged" and invaded by curiosity. You do not just leave the Polo, you take it with you. Among the many enduring difficulties, the Business Park stands and remains as a challenge, but the enhanced communion we experience makes us dream of an increasingly shared and fruitful future.

At a crucial time for the Korean people, civil economy gives some signs of hope

Korea: the Goal of *Happiness for Everyone*

REGINA
MIN

The South Korean people are living a moment of serious institutional crisis because of the controversial relationship between President Park Geun-hye, elected in 2012, and the daughter of a leader of a shamanistic cult, which came to light last November. Apparently, due to her influence on the President, major Korean companies, including Samsung, have donated tens of millions of dollars to her foundation and that's not all... The news of the scandal sparked a massive protest: the people felt deceived and for several weeks over one million and eight hundred thousand citizens invaded the streets of Seoul peacefully, marching with candles to demand the resignation of the president. On 9 December 2016, the parliament voted for the impeachment of the president and now the Constitutional Court of South Korea has to decide whether to validate or not the decision of the parliament until June. It's easy to see that the state of uncertainty will remain as long as the affair is closed by assigning it the words "the end".

It is in this political and social context that the 7th Asia Future Forum entitled "Beyond GDP, the Goal of Happiness for Everyone" was held. Promoted on 23 and 24 November in Seoul by the important Korean newspaper Hankyoreh, the Forum placed a particular attention to civil economy, believed to be able to provide "sustainable alternatives of happiness" for everyone. **Luigino Bruni** gave the main talk dealing with "public happiness and relational goods" and moderated the round table discussion entitled "Recommendations and Requirements for a World of Shared Happiness" that touched the heart of the current crisis in Korea. His audience included some influential politicians (the president of the Korean Parliament and the candidates in the forthcoming presidential elections in 2017), representatives of large-scale industry, the media and civil economy as well as many academics. The lecture had a

strong impact on all those present. The next day Hankyoreh published an extensive article entitled: "Happiness is Essentially a Question of Human Relationships".

In the days of his stay in Korea, Luigino Bruni also had several opportunities to talk about "Plantlike



Capitalism", a topic that attracted interest and amazement in the students of the 7th School of Politics for Unity, in politicians, scholars and experts in the work of Civil Economy, in the entrepreneurs of the 1st and 2nd generation of the EoC present at the Social Forum promoted by the Korean MPPU (Movement for Unity in Politics) and in the students and professors of political and civil economy of the **Chonbuk National University of Jongju** (including Kim Sungsu, the mayor of the city).

After a week of "full immersion" in civil economy, a person who was accompanying Luigino Bruni stated: "We are starting to see moments of hope in today's crisis." If, as Chiara Lubich said, there is a solution for every problem in the Gospel, then it is also true that once you understand the solution, the sciences have to translate it into knowledge and living standards for the different times and different cultures. Accompanying Luigino Bruni on this trip it has become certain to me that this is possible."



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A growing commitment in the creation of jobs for the poor and young people, also through the worldwide network of incubators

Shared Profits: *Our 2016 Report*

The tables concern the year 2016 and the last quarter of 2015 because the management of earnings was changed to follow the calendar year. The data are grouped according to major content areas in two tables: the first shows the profits administered by the international organizational structure that makes a communion of goods possible together with the united world. The second table presents the profits managed by local EoC facilities and by individual entrepreneurs, a trend that aims to achieve an increasing effectiveness of use and an increased proximity of enterprises to the needs of the poor and to the formation of new persons, both in and outside their respective geographical areas.

The profits recorded come to a total of **€ 1,774,591**. The part utilised locally constitutes a little more than a third of this. Even though sometimes they are a significant part of the communion of companies, benefits in kind and the resources shared with the workers of the companies themselves have not been accounted for in numbers.

In 2016, € 897,470 of profits were distributed by the international organization, and € 621 944 by local ones, which makes a total of **51% for the poor and 49% for training**. The special contribution for the poor shared by members of the Focolare Movement is excluded from these accounts as it is now administered directly by the Movement itself.

Of all that is reserved for the poor 13% is to cover the costs of food, 11% goes for medical expenses, 10% for housing and 29% for schooling. The remaining parts - 14% for social projects and 24% for new jobs and the creation of the worldwide network of EoC-IIN incubators – show a greater commitment in this direction: in cooperation with AMU, more attention has been paid to social projects, to education and the creation of jobs, leaving the task of responding to the additional needs of food, health and housing to the Focolare Movement.

Part of the resources dedicated to creating jobs were used for the overhead expenses of EoC associations with shortages of local resources, whose experts are trying to design, evaluate, finance and follow entrepreneurial projects, especially those of young people, in a manner best suited to their region.

As for training, locally managed earnings were a major contribution: some especially considerable resources have been offered by Mundell Associates in North America to host young people from around the world to spend time with the company, motivating and helping them to design their own plan for an EoC company. 28% of training resources were spent for Sophia University Institute, 19% went in support of the business parks and for the training facilities of the Focolare Movement; 24% for schools and conferences, 9% for supporting its associations, 16% for publications and the international web site; 4% for central management expenditures.



REPORT 2016	INCOME 2016
Managed by the International Commission of the EoC	Profits Shared (Euro)
Italy	290,666
Western Europe	338,781
Central Europe	61,071
Eastern Europe	12,940
Middle East	0
Africa	0
Asia	283,079
North America	33,150
Central America	31,818
Latin America	27,713
Brazil	73,430
International Secretariat	
Total (in international management)	1,152,647

REPORT 2016	INCOME 2016
Managed by Local EoC Companies and Commissions	Profits Shared (Euro)
Italy	47,000
Western Europe	48,617
Eastern Europe	85,850
Middle East	2,983
Asia	93,845
North America	173,100
Brasil	25,000
Latin America	145,549
Total (in local management)	621,944
Grand Total	1,774,591



EXPENDITURES FOR THE POOR 2016 (Managed internationally)							EXPENDITURES FOR TRAINING 2016 (Managed internationally)							
Food	Health	Housing	School	Social Projects	New Enterprises Development	Total	EoC Schools	Congresses	EoC Associations	Business Parks and Facilities	University	Publishing and Web	Management Costs	Total
6,247	4,147	15,076	2,862	0	3,242	31,574	8,941	10,231		6,100	200,000	13,000	12,000	250,272
0	0	0	0	0	17,128	17,128			7,500					7,500
0	0	0	0	0	0	0								0
27,845	9,423	20,059	47,556	0	9,558	114,440	1,857							1,857
7,355	8,424	842	2,106	2,160	0	20,887								0
2,002	1,189	2,262	10,795	664	4,269	21,181	1,331							1,331
2,951	2,685	2,299	28,771	0	0	36,707		1,678						1,678
2,644	0	726	7,776	0	0	11,146								0
6,493	10,096	2,365	31,263	6,264	4,000	60,481								0
4,957	18,276	13,093	14,892	1,440	0	52,657								0
32,950	22,937	9,123	52,130	0	20,326	137,466		3,570	18,000					21,570
0	0	0	0	0	24,252	24,252	24,252	9,548				32,876	18,668	85,344
93,443	77,178	65,845	198,150	10,528	82,775	527,918	36,381	25,027	25,500	6,100	200,000	45,876	30,668	369,552

EXPENDITURES FOR THE POOR 2016 (Managed locally)							EXPENDITURES FOR TRAINING 2016 (Managed locally)							
Food	Health	Housing	School	Social Projects	New Enterprises Development	Total	EoC Schools	Congresses	EoC Associations	Business Parks and Facilities	University	Publishing and Web	Management Costs	Total
		5,000		18,500	10,000	33,500	3,500			5,000	5,000			13,500
					48,617	48,617								0
					1,740	1,740				45,636		38,474		84,110
						0				2,983				2,983
						0		12,000	8,000	50,000		23,845		93,845
2,070		3,800	6,500	35,830	18,300	66,500	51,000	22,800	1,700	26,400		4,700		106,600
									25,000					25,000
4,540	5,000	4,585	21,697	42,712	24,358	102,892	3,515	23,439	5,210	2,605		6,800	1,088	42,657
6,610	5,000	13,385	28,197	97,042	103,015	253,249	58,015	58,239	39,910	132,624	5,000	73,819	1,088	368,695
100,053	82,178	79,230	226,347	107,570	185,790	781,167	94,396	83,266	65,410	138,724	205,000	119,695	31,756	738,247

From training to the culture of giving, the first EoC projects have been created

The First Steps of the EoC in Russia

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The Moscow community has started to develop in the culture of giving, with the objective of getting to know the basics of the Economy of Communion and putting its principles into practice. After our young people had participated in the Summer School in Prague and at various conferences, the first projects were born. After the School, the young entrepreneur Anton Lundin decided to join the EoC, but he did not know how, since his start-up, just created, did not have any profit yet: so he thought that a concrete way of adherence would be creating new jobs for young people and families in need. Anton is a beekeeper and his apiary produces products such as royal jelly and propolis, for the support of the immune system; these are products made with great care and respect for nature and the environment. Anton could offer a job of delivering his products to a mother with many children and now she can live in dignity with her big family.

I also realised my first EoC project this year: an international summer camp for youngsters in Sardinia in collaboration with an Italian Association. It was a great and adventurous holiday for children and teenagers aged 8 to 18 years with a package tours organization, not only for the kids but also for parents: it was all about having fun, getting to know and love the life of the woods and the sea, with knowledge and responsibility. The kids were the protagonists of a fantastic experience: hiking, swimming, canoeing, diving, volleyball, soccer, horseback riding, caving, trail in the trees, orientation in the woods and mountains, excursions, learning the Italian language (for the Russian kids) and other activities. The project created summer jobs for Russian students of Italian who worked as animator-translators. For us it was the first experience of this kind, and we certainly encountered some unforeseen problems, unexpected expenses and more ... but in the end everything went very well financially: we could create three jobs in Moscow and 5 in Sardinia, in one of the poorest provinces of

Italy. Many people were happy to be able to go on this holiday. An acquaintance of mine from among the entrepreneurs of the tourism sector in Moscow told me: "To increase your profit you could have cranked up the price of the summer camp, in such a beautiful and sought-after place... why didn't you?" I explained to him that this was not the point: our goal was to offer a quality service at a fair price for everyone, not just the few "chosen ones." In this way, we have met the needs of families in difficulty when it comes to managing their children during the summer holidays, without making a distinction between the rich and the poor. In 2017 we will move forward with a new edition of the Summer Camp for which the programme has already been prepared, and we will develop new EoC projects in Moscow.



The concrete help of AIPEC entrepreneurs to a company struck by the earthquake in Central Italy

A New Start for **Nando & Maria's Company**

ORNELLA
SECA

A few days after the tragic earthquake of 24 August, while TV broadcasts were still showing the heaps of rubble, all the directing board of AIPEC* was pondering about what sense an association of entrepreneurs could make in a situation in which many families have lost everything. Without their house, without their loved ones, without the community fabric that made these places the extraordinary oases of Central Italy.

There emerged an immediate and unanimous desire to help businesses start over and resume creating jobs for the people and the families of the region. To return and give life to the community again.

At the beginning of September we went there to get to know a business owner who made a particular impression on us with his dignity and simplicity with which he spoke in front of the TV cameras explaining what the pile of rubble that remained of his company used to be for him.

The company named Filotei Lino Filotei Nando Sas is an artisan company specialized in handmade production, processing, and conservation of fresh foods. It is located in the municipality of Arquata del Tronto, in the province of Ascoli Piceno, in the hamlet of Pescara del Tronto, near the namesake spring that feeds the whole Ascolan Valley: a precious environment, including the Sibillini Mountains Park and the Laga Mountains Park, which have been the most affected areas.

Nando and Maria Filotei are determined, strong and tenacious; they had already found a small room in Ascoli Piceno where they could start over. We introduced ourselves to them and they greeted us like brothers and sisters; it was a simple mutual acquaintance, spontaneous, but intense and profound. They told us about their tragedy.

Solidarity was born inside AIPEC and it infected many friends with the desire to participate in their recovery. Maria and Nando happily accepted the invitation to attend the event in the LoppianoLab held in Figline Incisa and Val d'Arno in September



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and October. It ended with a solidarity dinner attended by over 100 people that yielded the basis of the first little capital to which other dinners and offers were added by many others who wanted to give a concrete expression of their closeness.

Four months have passed in which AIPEC has contributed € 3,586.00 and thanks to the tenacity of Nando and Maria we have witnessed a small miracle: they were able to serve all the abundant supply requests received from fair trade groups and private customers and their deliveries were fully scheduled for the Christmas season.

*Associazione imprenditori italiani per una Economia di Comunione
(Italian Entrepreneurs' Association for an Economy of Communion)

Difficulties and successes of the first productive business park of the Economy of Communion in Brazil

The Challenges of Spartaco Business Park

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Polo Spartaco was born in 1993 near the Mariapolis Ginetta, the citadel of the Focolare Movement located 50 km from Sao Paulo, Brazil, as the first concrete evidence of an economy practiced with the paradigm of communion. The companies that have been set up are quite different, but all animated by entrepreneurs convinced that aid and assistance are not enough to redeem the poor from their vulnerability - which is also the reason for the creation of the business park. Instead, they must get involved and become the protagonists in economic relations. This is the spirit that animated **La Tunica**, the first company that settled in the business park. It was founded by Maria do Carmo Gaspar and Maria Aparecida Viegas: the former was a widow and mother of five children - she became an improvised entrepreneur in the clothing industry driven by her affection for Chiara Lubich and the EoC; the latter, the owner of two sewing machines, offered her machines and experience as a seamstress. In addition to experienced staff, they also called several mothers of the nearby favela to work in the nascent company: a real action for social redemption, which allowed them not only to work but also to acquire a profession and hence, economic independence.

Over time, other production companies moved in: **Rotogine**, launched by French entrepreneur Francois Neveux, who is a specialist in large plastic artifacts and environmental technologies; **Eco-Ar**, with its cleaning products, started by Ercilia Fiorelli in a basement and then transferred to the business park; **AVN Plastic Packaging**, a machine shop run by entrepreneur Augusto Lima Neto from San Paolo. Two more companies joined to these: **Prodiet Farmaceutica**, a commercial one sponsored by pharmaceutical entrepreneurs Armando and Roseli Tortelli active in the distribution of medicines, and another service provider company from the financial sector called **Uniben Fomento Mercantil**.

To build and operate the business park a joint stock company named ESPRI SA was formed, to which nearly 4,000 members from all social classes have already joined. "We are poor but many," said Chiara Lubich inviting everyone to pull together resources to build a "laboratory for an economy of communion":



many joined with enthusiasm and generosity. In 2005 the Association of Workers of the Business Park was created: apart from the benefits such as micro credit and discounts at shops in the region provided to its members it also offers a place of mutual acquaintances, useful for creating occasions of communion.



New Arrivals

Pasticcino is the latest arrival among the companies, having moved in to the business park five months ago. Specializing in the production of snacks for cafés, it is the "Brazilian branch" of a company operating successfully in the Argentinean EoC business park, **Polo Solidaridad**. With its five employees, the company took its first steps in Brazil by addressing the challenges of the start phase: the adjustment of production, opening markets and vocational training. "Pasticcino distinguishes itself from other companies in the industry for its way of building relationships between employees, customers and suppliers," says director Flávio Toledo. "Among us there is great freedom and friendship; we are all different, and sometimes there is some friction, but we always try to solve problems before they grow big, based on the principle that it is easier to work if we get along with each other, even if we are not alike. But we really need to commit to building relationships."

A New Type of Economic Action

From the experience of the financial company Uniben, in the field of insurance, Uniben Corretora de Seguros was set up two years ago. It seeks to build an atmosphere of trust and transparency with each and every customer: "It's a nice experience, especially of relationships - explains Mariella Francischinelli - because the commission we get for our work depends on the price of the insurance policies we sell: the more expensive the insurance, the higher the commission. But we offer the customer the solution that's more advantageous to them, even though this way our income is reduced - it may seem a bad strategy; yet we are starting to gather the fruits of this way of acting, through customer loyalty and new business opportunities. Our sales volume is growing by 15% per month." After two years of activity, the company achieved economic equilibrium and the first returns on the initial investment are on the horizon already.

Death and Resurrection

In recent years the economic performance of some companies in the Polo has deteriorated and their financial difficulties have also had an impact on the



income statement of ESPRI, because they have not been able to pay their rent. Hence the new challenges for the future of the business park, the addressing of which has made a greater communion among entrepreneurs necessary: Uniben has decided to broaden its activities by offering, in addition to financial services, their management skills as well to companies in difficulty. They have been doing this purely for communion and with good results.

A group of experts who got in touch with the EoC in various ways has offered to examine the management of ESPRI and suggested new strategies: entrepreneurs performing activities in the Polo have pledged to strengthen the communion between themselves. They are confident that, even if the success or failure of their companies had depended on the circumstances, their communion would have still remained indelible. In 2016, the fiscal consolidation progress of the companies have also helped improve the results of ESPRI.

The proposals for the future are many: encouraging new businesses for the EoC culture, enhancing the processes of the formation of a culture of sharing and strengthening the communion among all. These are important goals, but they are achievable only if supported by a fruitful life of communion.

Five "hubs" already active in Brazil, Cameroon, Croatia, Mexico and Portugal

EoC-IIN: a Network of Talents for New Companies



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The year of the 25th anniversary of the EoC prompted us to take a step forward: to promote innovation to bring about some new responses to the challenges of today together. EOC-IIN (Economy of Communion - International Incubating Network) was born in this context: a "first generation" of entrepreneurs and professionals offered themselves at the service of a "second generation" of young people with a vocation to inclusive entrepreneurship and communion.

Almost a year after the birth of the project, EoC operators of five countries - Brazil, Mexico, Portugal, Cameroon and Croatia - have already launched their own incubator with local resources and with a contribution from the international communion of profits, while another 12 countries are developing a strategy to create an EoC IIN Hub.

Portugal and Brazil - who already had experience of business incubation - have made some progress, Mexico and Cameroon have started to accompany some already running business projects with community resources.

In **Cameroon**, CRE, "Centre for Entrepreneurial Resources" was created, with a co-working space for the local EoC association and a company. CRE is beginning to operate as an EoC-IIN Hub bringing together experienced entrepreneurs and young people with business ideas, and soon there will be training workshops for new entrepreneurs.

In **Mexico**, there was a workshop on incubation for 3 projects, with a format that will be repeated in several other cities. The plan is to form a "community of incubated companies": groups of technical support and inspiration. In 2016 a project with the



University of Puebla was also started for the incubation of projects in an indigenous community. In 2017 we would like to strengthen the existing realities, accompanying the emergence of new Hubs and, parallel to this, promoting partnerships with organizations of social and civil economy. An experience of success in this direction is that of **ANPECOM**, the Brazilian EoC association, which, thanks to the international economic support and the transmission of know-how by a local partner, is conducting a training in entrepreneurship for 100 young people from vulnerability contexts. Furthermore, to strengthen the international network, we are developing a digital platform that makes keeping in touch easier and has a support function for incubation. The February international meeting in Castelgandolfo is expected to be a **training space for the Hubs**, where the countries that have already started their EoC-IIN activities share the methodologies developed with the countries that are at the beginning of their journey. It will be a great occasion to work together and define the next steps of our project.

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Those who feel they must answer the call to building an economy of communion know that in order not to get lost they must look at the world from the perspective of those who are the last.

A 25-year-old Prophecy

LUIGINO
BRUNI

The charismas are the continuation of the action of the prophets in the present. To understand St. Francis of Assisi or Chiara Lubich we must first of all think of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Moses. They are very similar, if we take a good look at these ones and the others. They all have met the Voice, they listened to it, they received a call, a task and they freed slaves. They then followed that voice and performed their task throughout their life and died before reaching the 'promised land'. They could only see it from a distance, because the promised land is always that of our children.

We do not understand the Economy of Communion if we do not think of it as an expression of the prophetic principle of the world. Those who have had the gift to live it, and those who, like us, got to know it in the world in these 25 years, have re-watched peoples leave Egypt, the sky open and the cherubs come down, a 'remnant' return from exile and crucifixes rise. Nothing more, but nothing less, either. If we had been more faithful we would have seen many more miracles, but, even in our infidelity, we have been flooded by miracles. The EoC will continue to see miracles for another 25, 50 or even 1000 years if it continues to be a prophecy.

But to do this it will also have to choose a viewing point from where to look at the world. Everyday. We can decide to judge society and our own actions placing ourselves on the pedestal of the powerful. From there, at the top, we see the world as a big market, where the comforts of life grow, while the poor become the dross, the price of this progress. However, if we choose to be the "impartial observer" (like Adam Smith) we can see several things: we judge human actions from the distance, we pronounce moral judgements but do not get down to the pitch to fight alongside the victims in order to reduce suffering and injustice. Christianity has given a great gift to humanity when it chose the crucifix as its primary symbol.

It could have chosen the risen Christ, but it didn't. Instead, it chose his point of view: "I have only one Spouse on earth: Jesus crucified and abandoned" (Chiara Lubich). We will be the prophecy, in a time that has an infinite need for it, if we don't lose this first look on the earth and sky.

The EoC and its people, in order to respond to the pain of the world, look at it from the perspective of the victims. They do it reliving the experience of Chiara's eyes and what she saw looking at Sao Paulo (Brazil), when she was able to observe capitalism from the favelas. She saw the skyscrapers, too, but she chose the favelas to judge the system. She took the gap between the skyscrapers and the shacks as a yardstick.

This latter choice of perspective is never abstract and detached: if we decide to look at the world placing ourselves next to the poor and the discarded, we cannot stay on the pedestal, we have



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to descend to the arena, stand next to the victims and fight for them – with them. In return we will be given new eyes, we will see things that others do not see, things that are sometimes very bad, at other times of infinite beauty. The EoC has been doing this for 25 years. If it is to stay alive it has to continue doing it every day, always better, always more.



FORMY, FOR ME, FOR YOU

by Vittorio Sedini

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