

VareseNews

Varese's young entrepreneurs, still looking good after 50 years

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"You tell your own story, with one of two objectives. Either you want to celebrate yourself, or you set out to understand who you have been, in order to decide who you want to be in the future." According to the chairman, Alberto Parma, it is with the latter of these objectives that the Group of Young Entrepreneurs of the Union of Industrialists of the Province of Varese decided to celebrate their first 50 years. Half a century of history is presented in a book that describes the most significant and curious events that have marked these years, retold in first person by the man leading the new generations of local entrepreneurs.

"Like with pieces of a puzzle," said the chairman of the Varese Group of Young Entrepreneurs, Alberto Parma, "we have reconstructed our image with the documents, reports, records, photos and newspaper cuttings in our archives." Then, there are "the testimonies of the group's past chairmen, which have been gathered together in the second part of the book." In this way, the story of one of the longest surviving Young Entrepreneur groups in Italy is told. This group, which was founded in 1959, was one of the first young entrepreneur groups of the Confederation of Italian Industry, Confindustria, which set up a national group only seven years later, in 1966.

The dates give an idea of the group's longevity. However, according to Alberto Parma, the initiatives carried out are a sign of "the ability our members have demonstrated over these years to be leaders among entrepreneurial groups, to be pioneers, able to anticipate the times." There are, for example, projects providing students with career guidance and advice on how to combine school and education, that began in the 1960s and that continue today; then, there were environmental protection initiatives in the 1970s; then, the analysis of energy problems and of the opportunities provided by new alternative sources, at the beginning of the 1980s; the topic of institutional reform in the 1990s; the meditation on the role, also social, of entrepreneurs in the 21st century; the contribution to the creation, in 1965, of Confidi (the Italian confederation guaranteeing access to loans); the boost to form a local import-export association, which was founded in 1975; continuous professional self-training, and visits to prominent businesses. These are all examples from a story of experiments, changes of direction, a search for new ways. "Like 1969," Alberto Parma remembers, "during the student protest, when we wanted to tackle the relationship between the school and the world of work. We visited the schools and set up a dialogue with headmasters,

teachers and students, and eventually became one of the most important external parties involved in helping young people to determine their futures.”

Alberto Parma continues, “This demonstrates that the Group of Young Entrepreneurs created a genuine workshop of ideas that has benefited industrial associations, the local area and businesses. Its members have been a driving force towards the future. This is what our story tells.”

Now, the challenge “is to continue to live up to this task”. And, as the chairman of the Union of Industrialists, Michele Graglia, claims, it was this challenge that provided the training ground for local managers, but not only. “Among the movement’s past chairmen, there are several that made careers for themselves in our association before moving on to Confindustria, some even becoming vice-chairmen. There’s a chairman of an Italian, and even of a European industrialist’s association. There is also a former mayor of an important city, and directors of public and economic agencies.” This shows that “the training ground has shaped new generations of managers that have served the community, and not only their professional associations.”

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