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EVG – ESRIN Voluntary Group  
c/o ESRIN  
Via G. Galilei – 00044 Frascati  
Italy

# EVG Newsletter

## 10 years and beyond

Massimo Cardaci

It is a period of change, for any of us. A period that is demanding everybody to adapt habits and vision of the future to a world evolving fast.

"Where are we going?" "Where are my reference points gone?", and other common sense questions coming to everyone's mind are the symptom that the change needs a framework of certainty to make sure that we do not get lost.

In this scenario in evolution there has been in ESRIN a reality that has represented an element of continuity, and that in this 2004 celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary since the foundation: the **EVG – ESRIN Voluntary Group**.

In these years it has evolved from a small group created by 3 people, to a *Solidarity Framework* helping thousands of other people with continuity and commitment.

This framework achieved to transform little drops of rain, dispersed across, into a full sea of flexible resources used to support both sustained activities and ad-hoc emergencies. It also allowed creating the conditions for whoever that desired so, to easily move from the culture of the "*I Want*" to the culture of the "*I Give*", or, from another angle, from the culture of the "*I am, first*" to the one of you "*You are, first*". It does not matter if you have 5 minutes per week or 1 hour per day: we can make it

become something useful and concrete for other less lucky people.

Something that, *a posteriori*, we really like of how all of this did develop is that is done under the cover, without wanting to show or to appear. Many people do not even know the EVG group, at least until they have a need: at that



point, committed and organised like ants, many people appear from nowhere, ready to give. Very busy people that will reorganise their priorities to make sure that the really important things come first.

This is the certainty that EVG has brought in this period of change, and that we aim to continue in the future, hopefully thanks to you help too.

In the following articles we have thought it was good to present, in occasion of this Anniversary, the best articles from the previous newsletters. They are snapshots of the EVG evolution that help to understand why we are now as we are, and what challenges were... challenged!

Just to conclude, let me say a special thanks to three people.

Our big friend **Maurizio Fea**, that regardless of his very busy schedule has

always time to make the difficult things to happen (always with a big smile!).

**Luis Steindl**, that has now left ESA since a while, but that has been one of the big supporters in the early days in which everything was hard, including on the financial side...

**Concetta Carideo**, that is continuing Luis work to make everyone getting the needed resources, when needed.

## The History of our "To Give"

*Massimo Cardaci*

The "bla bla" is important, but facts are the best way to help everyone (including us) understanding what we are doing.

So here is a just a list of the main activities, described with the minimum level of detail that can stimulate your curiosity and interest, but without any relevance order: everything is important.

We have tried to focus our standard activities along two guidelines: operating in the area (now it would be called "Social Responsibility", but at the time this buzzword did not exist...), and ensuring sustained trustable support over time (problems tend to have the bad habit to continue even after the initial interest of the many is over...).

For further details, see the FAQ box.

Rocca di Papa Orphanage (now "Casa Famiglia"): supporting the restructuring of the house (that otherwise was going to be closed), providing IT for the child, so that they can learn and build a brighter autonomous future, material for

the school, food and toys for Christmas, tours in Rome's areas to "have a different day..."

Support to homeless of Rome: periodic funds to pay for food (weekly distributed) and special medical needs.

Support to handicap organisations in the area: buying special furniture, regular sustain of social activities to ensure parents can have a relief.

Web site to collect, categorise and distribute information for people with disabilities: 500 request of help per year, 22000 hits per month

Ad-hoc support for major events in the cases of Floods, Earthquakes and other population emergencies: collection and DIRECT dispatching of funds, clothes, toys, food. We went also up to Kosovo.

Support to personal difficulties of many single people (sanitary, deaths, etc.), with the same commitment of the major events.

One question is how we collect the funds. Just as an example, look at the Children's Christmas party: the hand-made stuff that we sell there have been done by ESRIN people or by their families, putting their time, effort, ability and money to make sure we can raise the funds necessary to sustain the activities we support. It is

good to remember that 100% of the funds for the initiatives, and not even 1 cent goes to the management of the Organisation itself.

## Convincing by Example

*Massimo Cardaci*

(December 1999)



One of the most interesting points to ponder of today's communication is that it is a one-way-only information flow. TV, radio, newspapers, books, CD-ROMs and Internet too are primarily a way for someone to *tell you* something. Very little interaction or feedback is allowed... So it happens that information loses credibility very quickly when you perceive that what is documented is not exactly what happens in reality. The impact of this scenario on the people's psychology is particularly devastating in the Volunteers arena, where thrust and commitment are the main keywords. So it is of paramount importance in the society of the III Millennium to convince others with facts more than with words. On this basis, most of the EVG activity is based on *doing* things more than on talking about what has to be done. We do spend our time to finalise the projects we perceive as viable, hoping that this can be an example for other people wanting to join.

When for the first time we decided to put this approach in place, we asked people to do some hand-made objects to be sold for fund-raising purposes at the Christmas Children Party in 1998. We realised that just few people knew what to do, and that the core team did the majority of things. But we also noticed that many wanted to help and were really interested in "how can I also do this?" One year after, more and more people are participating, and their

feedback has shown that the approach worked. As a side issue we were happy to verify that “it wasn’t all about money”: people were happy *to do* things instead of talking and just dropping money in a box. Lesson learned... Positive lesson learned!

If you like this, join us and don’t let the negative side of today’s communication to inhibit your wish to help.

## A Matter of Priorities

Massimo Cardaci

(June 2000)

The human’s body is the most wonderful and complex entity existing on Earth. It is able to do things that the most powerful computer in the world is far from imaging. Nevertheless is also a very simple execution unit, far beyond the cheapest computer in the world: basically we voluntarily do things one at time, no matter how simple they are.

Even if it is natural to us, e.g. we do not realise it explicitly, the sequence of things we do are driven by the priorities we assign (and I remark we) on the basis of the inputs we receive and of our consolidation of all these information.

We frequently think that other people are assigning us priorities, but this is not true. It is us that give relevance to the inputs received from other people or circumstances.

The comprehension of this difference is crucial, and creates the difference between people owners of their time and people that have lost control of it.

When people say that they have no time for volunteer activities, they are de-facto stating that volunteer activities have a very low priority in their life.

Each of us can easily recognise that if

we decide to do a thing, we will organise ourselves in order to do it. In other words, if we decide that an action has a very high priority, we will find time to do it in the available time frame.

A simple example: if we have to catch a train leaving at 12:43 from Rome, we will be there no matter how many other elements appear in the meantime requiring our attention: they will just have less priority, or we act to make them not

impacting the main goal.

All of us have to understand which priority we want to give to volunteer activities, and stick to it. We must just be honest with ourselves in this analysis: there are volunteer activities for the people putting it at the top, but at the same time there is possibility to involve people that put it nearly at the bottom! Do your choices! We are just asking you to do that: you will find some pleasant surprises.



## FAQ – Frequently Asked Questions

### What does it mean EVG?

EVG stands for ESRIN Voluntary Group. We decided this name because it reflects the underlying spirit. *ESRIN* (is born to co-ordinate all the people in ESRIN wishing to help others) *Voluntary* (nobody is obliged, but every member has to be committed because it is important) *Group* (together we can do more than the sum of disperse parts).

### How do I contact you?

We have ESRIN e-mail contacts you can use, but we still think that human first contact is the best. Come to speak with Maurizio (Fea), Concetta (Carideo), Massimo (Cardaci) and Micaela (de Lorentiis).

### I have no time: how can I help?

In each newsletter you find proposal on how can you help (look in this one too). We have opportunities for everyone: from 5 minutes a week to whatever amount of time you want to allocate. We will try together to exploit your value and capacities. And if you have specific ideas, tell us! What we really require is that you are committed in what you offer: working as a voluntary group, we have to rely on the available resources as being *really* available. And if after speaking with us you still think that you have no time, help us financially!

## The Butterfly Effect

Massimo Cardaci

(December 2001)

With the new Globalisation in place, dependencies amongst events happening in different angles of our planet (angles in a sphere is a strange concept, isn’t it?) are nowadays a rules of fact.

There are obvious ones (see the people looking to Japan’s shares to know what will happen in their personal portfolio, or satellites looking to meteo conditions

far away to predict if it will rain or not on another place.

But there are other more hidden, but more interesting ones more close to the original butterfly effect. This effect states that a butterfly just flapping its wings in Australia may generate, through a series of chain effects, a tornado in Mexico. A chain reaction amplifying at every passage the effects of the original event.

As every chain reaction that shall be respected, the final effect is proportional to the number of steps it is allowed to go through...

Imagine we are on 1970. Mr X or Mrs Y is involved in volunteer activities on a small suburb of a big city and need more help. On another corner of the city, Mr Z or Mrs W would like to do volunteers activities, but do not know where to start with. Result... you know... the two will not talk....

Now we are on 2002 (ok... just a few days left).

The first group may advertise globally their needs, and other may adhere. But this is not yet a butterfly effect...

The effect starts when other people become aware of the need and

broadcast the request to other people, whose in turn broadcast it to many other in an exponential growth. If in this chain there are people wishing to help, on any angle of Earth, they will know and join in.

Result: solidarity can easily spread around the world. The small butterfly activity of a single person on a small

suburb, may become a full global-wide organisation.

This as a secondary effect tot negligible: the excuse "I am one... what can I do?" is no more valid: each of us is a butterfly of a chain-reaction effect that is awaiting us to start.

## Point to Ponder

*Massimo Cardaci*

We think you will find this common sentence very intellectually appealing. Take it as few words of humour, but at the same time please consider that unfortunately many people take it seriously:

*"When everyone will do that, I will be the first."*



## This space is for you!

Do you want to write in this newsletter? Do you have an idea, experience or proposal within the scope of the EVG spirit that you want to communicate? Write your article and send it to us.

