

Report of the meeting of the European Poland / Ukraine Collective
25 - 26 October 2016
Emmaus Lublin, Poland

Participants:

Willi Does, Collective representative and EE president, Rudi Wilhelm, Emmaus Cologne, Germany.

Zbigniew Drazkowski, Ela Guc, Elzbieta Tata, Lucyma and Thomas Regnard, Emmaus Lublin, Poland.

Natalya Mysula, Natalya Sanotska, Emmaus Oselya, Ukraine

Robert Opoka, Grzegorz Hadjuk, Lesek Lizon, Krystyna Krzyzanowska-Galas, Emmaus Brat Albert, Poland.

Krzysztof Serwiński, Grazyna Moskal, Emmaus Rzeszów, Poland.

Vasyl Holod, Oksana Kolodiy, Nasha Khata, Ukraine.

Jos Van Der Meer, Emmaus Haarzuilens, Netherlands.

Helka Ahava, Emmaus Helsinki, Finland.

Pierre Dubois, Pascal Louvet, Emmaus Annemasse, France.

Isabelle Jondot, Emmaus Norges-Dijon and Pierre Eliet, Emmaus Planay, Franche-Comté Burgundy Emmaus Region, France.

Claudia Bouveresse, Gilles Vasseur, Emmaus Chambéry.

Lise Daviet, Emmaus International Secretariat.

Camille Decaens, Emmaus Europe Secretariat.

Introduction by the President of Emmaus Europe, Willi Does.

The Emmaus Movement offers an alternative. We need to continue bolstering shelter and support, create an open and fair society to contend with the new wave of nationalism sweeping across Europe, the populists who advocate exclusion and closing borders, and to confront terrorism. The Regional Council of Emmaus Europe (RCEE) held in mid-October took decisions about future lobbying and solidarity work with the aim being to foster inclusion and integration. In this respect, just like the other collectives, the Poland-Ukraine Collective is discussing the alternative we offer in practical terms.

1. Group news: review and prospects

Emmaus Rzeszow, Poland - Developments

Information about the group's financial situation since the May 2016 Collective meeting

June 2016: A first audit was carried out by Emmaus Brat Albert and found that the group's finances were being managed improperly. The audit recommended outsourcing the accounts to an external firm.

July 2016: On the request of Emmaus Europe and with his community's agreement, Pierre Dubois paid a four-day visit to **offer support to Emmaus Rzeszów**. He focused on analysing the financial, social and practical aspects, alongside the group's leader, the accountant and the translator. Outcomes:

- A number of protocols have been implemented to help the community to structure itself.
- Job descriptions have been produced for and signed by each employee. Declaration and payment of salaries.
- Overdue bills and debts (rent and social security contributions) were highlighted. A staggered payments system has been set up and is included in the operating costs.
- Payment of outstanding invoices for structural work.

- Creation of projected and actual income and expenditure tables for the purposes of comparison.

The community has also taken steps to cut costs and increase income:

- Stop renting the storage premises in Rzeszów. Part of the building in Czudec is now used for storage. The community still has two charity shops.
- An entire salary has been cut, as two people now work part-time. A staff member on maternity leave will not be returning. Seven people are currently on the payroll.
- Development of the carpentry workshop and furniture restoration work.
- Development of pick-ups and collections. The group has distributed leaflets, had a news item broadcast on the radio and used advertising boards. Collection of furniture and new items from a glassware company.
- Increase the sales floor in Czudec, particularly for clothing.

The active involvement of the community's 10 companions was underscored at this point.

The meeting's participants were informed about the group's financial situation.

- The community's operating costs: €10,000 a month.
- Monthly loan repayments amount to €3,598 until November 2016, rising to €6,150 per month until March 2017, and increasing to €9,213 until September 2020, before gradually going down.
- The group's monthly sales income is €18,000.
- There is an outstanding invoice of €25,000.
- Loans extended by European Emmaus groups need to be included in these calculations. While some may agree to convert their loans into donations, not all the groups are in a position to do so. The groups in question have been contacted/will be contacted about the matter.

Sales income is not going down, but from April 2017 the group will need to increase sales by roughly €2,000 per month. The current frequency of lorry loads of goods donated by other European groups needs to be maintained (one per month) and the group needs to collect more goods and forge partnerships with other organisations.

Clarifications

- A section of the building cannot be rented out, nor can the building be sold for the next four years, otherwise the group would have to pay back the European funding.

Emmaus Rzeszow's leadership team was asked about their vision for the future. Does the group wish to sell up or continue the work of the residential and working community? Two of the loans will have been repaid in four years' time and a third loan will have been repaid in five years' time. The group most definitely wants to continue!

Questions from the floor

- What was the root cause of the problems? The group was overwhelmed by the stipulated conditions when rolling out the EU programme. Human shortcomings are also to blame for the mismanagement.
- How can the Polish groups help Emmaus Rzeszow? The Polish groups are still repaying loans and do not have reserves enabling them to provide financial support. However, they could provide practical support.
- Have the companions been fully informed about the situation? Yes, they are now aware of the situation because meetings were recently held to bring them up to speed. The whole team must now rise to the challenge together.
- Has the group identified the management issues? An income and expenditure management system is now in place. There is a need to look in detail at the root causes so that the group can improve the situation. Trust needs to be restored and practical solutions need to be considered based on clear figures.

- Would it not be wise to make Emmaus Rzeszów's building the property of Emmaus Europe? This could help restore trust. This move would have a major legal impact and would affect all the buildings including the mortgages. The EU project requires Emmaus Rzeszów to remain owners for a further four years.

It was suggested that a team comprising Willi, Robert, Grzegorz, Pierre and Jose, supported by the Regional Secretariat, work with Emmaus Rzeszów to discuss potential solutions and to support the group. However, the Collective members can provide advice and support, but proposals must come from Emmaus Rzeszów, as the group needs to be the driving force behind its own recovery.

- Willi will send his Regional Executive colleagues an update on the situation and the issue of the outstanding €25,000. Trust needs to be restored.

- Emmaus Rzeszów will send the support team its practical ideas for turning around the situation in a responsible fashion, backed by all the companions and members of the group.

- The partners are invited to contribute ideas for developing new income-generating activities which would help increase the group's income.

Emmaus Oselya - Developments

Following the death of the director, Olesia Sanotska, in April of this year, Oselya has set up a **working group to consider how to ensure continuity in the management of the group**, how to share out responsibilities and in order to discuss day-to-day issues. Natalya Mysula and Natalya Sanotska are now co-leaders. Oleh Zharovskyy remains the president.

Oselya has been able to improve the community's heating system thanks **to the support of the Fondation Abbé Pierre in 2016**. 17 companions currently live in the community.

The aim is to continue supporting the companions and bolster the work done to combat addiction, including offering psychological support.

The income-generating activities are continuing in the two shops, two recycling facilities, and the carpentry and furniture restoration workshops. Some 20 textile collection containers are located around the town but the challenge now is to educate people about the donations lifecycle and the aim of collecting goods. Oselya is developing information campaigns at big sales and is also running campaigns to raise awareness about the group's work. The street newspaper sold by the companions is also a means of publicizing their initiatives.

In the same vein, the group's **shelter and support and solidarity work continues**, including a soup run for the homeless, the shelter providing showers, changing rooms and washing machines, and supporting the residential shelter's residents.

A large number of refugees from Eastern Ukraine are still looking for accommodation, food and goods. Since 2014, camps have been set up for the displaced people but the government is unable to provide the sort of accommodation conducive to a stable life. NGOs are therefore offering additional support to the displaced people, notably in terms of social and professional integration in the neighbourhood.

The collective was informed about Oselya's financial problems.

The group now has a debt of €8,000, notably because of inconsistent management during Olesia's illness and tasks being shared out among people with different admin and finance skill levels.

Oselya has used funding earmarked for other projects to be able to implement its priorities. Since then, the focus has been on generating additional income through sales and recycling. The deficit has been reduced and the aim is to pay it off by the end of 2016. However, the funding from the European solidarity programme has not been switched to other priorities:

- In 2015, the publication of a book was supported by European solidarity. An agreement has been signed with the writer Andrei Kourkov for a book scheduled for publication by the end of 2016.
- In 2016, the purchase of a building for the furniture restoration workshop was supported (€20,000). The group has decided to delay the purchase, as they are not sure if this is the right direction to take at the present time.

Oselya was asked if it requires additional financial support, but the group stated that it preferred to try to get by using its own resources in the first instance. However, the group will make an application for solidarity funding for 2017.

Prospects

- End the year with the accounts in the black.
- Implement the projects underway.
- Provide more support for the companions who found Olesia's death hard to handle. They will be supported by a psychologist funded by a Dutch foundation.
- Strengthen the community by building the companions' skills through IT and personal finance management training and developing their life plans.
- Set up a programme for integrating the displaced people from Eastern Ukraine into the neighbourhood.
- Consider the issue of waste management and train the local community to sort their waste. The group is contending with an environmental problem following the closure of a public waste tip as people no longer know where to dispose of their waste.
- Develop the warehouse to improve sorting. The warehouse has a number of small rooms stopping sorting from being done efficiently and preventing textiles from being kept from one season to the next. Furthermore, given that the premises are rented, the owners could ask the group to leave at any time. At the present time, there is no legislation in force prohibiting the group from selling what it collects in the containers.

In response to the remark that **these projects cost more than they bring in**, Oselya replied that happy companions work better. If the warehouse layout is improved, sales income could be increased. This all chimes with the work done by Emmaus Europe on empowerment and developing the skills of community members.

How close to implementation are these different projects? Oselya is in the process of establishing its organizational structure, setting its priorities and developing its future action plan. The group needs more time. The team will meet in November 2016 to progress these different work areas.

Nasha Khata

The Collective was introduced to Oksana Kolodiy, who has taken over the admin and accounting work from Ivanna Danylko. 27 people live in the community.

Work camps were held this summer with volunteers from different countries and a group of Ukrainian students. Nasha Khata has received support from Caritas Vienna so that it can renovate the warehouse where clothing is sorted. The group has also helped build the roof of a small community of five people located 10km from Nasha Khata.

Donations received from the European groups under the **2016 solidarity programme** have enabled Nasha Khata to do the following:

- **Cover the wages of three employees** (€7,750), thus ensuring that the community is stable, well-organized and properly managed, and enabling the community's farming and textile collection and sale businesses to be developed.

- **Buy and set up three containers** to collect second-hand goods (€1,200). In late 2015, Nasha Khata opened a charity shop in Stebnyk. Four additional containers have been funded by the Carpathian Foundation.
- **Clear and plough the fields, sow and harvest cereals** (€2,900). The group has been granted the right to use six hectares of land free-of-charge for three years. The orchard produced its first crop this year. Grass has been sown on some of the land, providing hay for the cows this winter, which should increase their milk production.
The group has harvested 13 tonnes of potatoes, 2.5 tonnes of barley, three tonnes of oats, 1.8 tonnes of buckwheat and six tonnes of triticale. Carrots, beetroot, maize, courgettes and pumpkins have been sown. The team was therefore able to successfully complete the growing season and begin another cycle. In 2016, 200 chickens were bought for the farm thanks to the good farming results.

The group is currently changing status because national law requires new members to be included on the board, comprising three members of Caritas, two volunteers and two people from Nasha Khata (Vasyl and Bogdan). The president, Ihor Shved, represents both Nasha Khata and Caritas. Natalya Musyla (from Oselya) has offered to join the board but has not received a response to date.

As for the group's trial membership application, all the information has been sent to Nasha Khata, and the group will work in partnership with Oselya, its mentor group, to select the right time if it wants to join the Emmaus Movement.

A discussion got underway about whether the group is independent from Caritas. Nasha Khata has been linked to Caritas since it was formed. However, its own identity and independence could be developed over time, both in practical organizational terms and in terms of the organisation's future plans. The board is not designed to be a forum in which each member champions their own interests; instead the board should work together in the association's best interests. There is no need to rush becoming a member of Emmaus. It is possible to have partners with links to Caritas. The requirements will change once Nasha Khata wishes to join the Emmaus Movement.

The importance of being mindful about the pitfall of 'false pretences' in a country like Ukraine was stressed at this point; indeed, in such countries where organizations simply have to work with European partners, they may be tempted to conceal their true identity or convey the image required by their partners in order not to lose them. This has been a difficult period for Oselya but there is now fresh impetus and the bonds with Nasha Khata will be reforged. Values and the action plan for the coming years will be discussed in an upcoming meeting at Nasha Khata.

Emmaus Brat Albert - Nowy Sacz and Krakow

The community is home to a large number of people who are alcohol-dependent. The aim is to provide them with support. In particular, the daily half-hour meeting helps to forge strong ties between the community's members and improve communication.

Abstinence requires constant work on oneself. Several companions have undergone treatment in hospital lasting several weeks and hearing about their experiences on their return is a source of strength to continue and not relapse.

Collections The last few months have been positive for collecting unwanted goods and clothing but the furniture collected tends to be small and poor quality. The lorry loads of goods sent by the European groups enable the community to offer more clothing, large items of furniture and ornaments to its customers. However, the shop is too small.

Outlook

A section of the buildings on the community's plot of land has been knocked down and **a 600m² building with three floors will be built in its place**. The basement will be used to sort and store ornaments, the ground floor will accommodate the furniture shop and the first floor under the eaves will probably be used to sell smaller items and for the workshops. The group will fund this building work itself, using money saved over the past few years.

The council's health and social policy committee will pay a visit in late October 2016 and this visit will be a good opportunity to discuss and showcase the work done.

The initiatives run in the coldest months of the year are resuming now that winter has arrived.

The first companion to be involved in Emmaus Brat Albert's winter work has died. The community did not want him to be buried in a mass grave and has therefore decided to purchase a cemetery vault for the community.

The shelter Since 5 September 2016, the government has started to register facilities working with the homeless and has begun to impose working conditions on them, thus jeopardizing the existence of those who do not meet the required standards. The scope of the decree is as yet unknown and upcoming regulations will specify the practical organizational and structural details.

Other associations have been involved in prior consultations on this issue but their views were not taken on board, as the government adopted the opposite position.

The Krakow site Everything is going well at the community. The workshop is doing well and the farm is a success. The group has been focusing on renovating customers' furniture since September. The team will also have a stall to sell its own produce at an organic food market next month. The site is self-sufficient thanks to the lorry loads of goods sent by the European groups.

Emmaus Lublin

Given that the meeting is taking place at Emmaus Lublin, the participants will have the chance to visit the group's sites: the three houses, the shop and the social co-op.

Three income-generating activities bring in financial resources:

- Collection, sorting and sale of items from the local area or from the lorry loads of donated goods.
- The carpentry workshop makes wooden street furniture (park benches and tables, bins, bus stops and other items).
- The pizzeria. Six companions are involved. Some of the produce comes from the group's vegetable garden.

However, these three workplaces require significant human resources and they also need to be managed.

2015 solidarity project - Renovating the shop and community house 3. The sum of €20,000 was transferred to the group for this initiative in late 2015. The need to build a drainage system (because of runoff) became apparent when building the car park linking up the two premises, thus leading to additional expenditure. The next phases of the project and notably the external insulation will be dependent upon the winter weather.

Outlook

The group has plans to purchase commercial premises (300m²) in the centre of the district opposite the pizza restaurant. The idea would be to transfer the shop to these premises, with the existing shop being used for storage. The group's customers are finding it hard to access the existing shop as the railway level crossing has been closed to vehicle traffic. The sale price should be roughly €120,000 but the premises have not yet been put on the market.

Initiatives in other countries

Members of an **association from Metriena in Latvia** visited Emmaus Lublin in early October. This group of friends is called *Three Friends*. Their general aims and objectives were listed: support disadvantaged people, encourage volunteering, and provide support for at-risk social groups, isolated elderly people, families with three or more children, and people with disabilities. Willi told the meeting that discussions are also underway with **Smiltene in Latvia**.

An **association from Georgia** had been invited to take part in the Collective but did not manage to obtain a visa. Initial contact has been made with EI, EE and Emmaus Oselya. The association has been advised not to use the Emmaus name. The intention is to hold talks with the association to find out more about its work before it applies to join EI. A phased support system would be put in place. The President of EE will invite the association to attend the next collective set to take place in Ukraine, a country for which Georgians do not require a visa.

2. Feedback about community projects in Poland and the support provided in the Collective

Talking openly about problems is vital in order to build trust and ensure transparency. Experience goes to show that the real problems remain hidden 'out of sight', making it difficult to support the groups, just as it is difficult to force the groups to explain themselves. Emmaus Rzeszów was asked to provide precise financial information on several occasions but clear answers were not really forthcoming. The aim is to draw conclusions. Trust can be built for the future if financial problems and the group's desire to resolve them are talked about openly. If this is done, it opens up the possibility of working together in the future.

Are there limits to the independence and freedom of each community? Group freedom and independence to stop any interference were mentioned several times. While a balance needs to be struck between a group's natural independence from its supporting partners, independence cannot be seen in absolute terms for groups with ambitious projects requiring collective support. The commitment made by the Emmaus Movement's other members should ultimately hold sway over the group's opinion alone. We must not be reticent about laying down conditions when a group's security could be jeopardized.

There is also a need to respect collectively taken decisions. If EI, EE or the Collective turn down requests but the group in question decides to override them or directly contact friendly Emmaus groups, it becomes difficult to work together in a transparent fashion.

We need to remain realistic about our Movement's actual capacity. A reminder of events: two community house projects were presented at the same time - Krakow and Rzeszów. Talks were held between the two to determine which was more urgent. The scale of the investment required was not the same. The initial project submitted by Emmaus Rzeszów was ambitious but feasible. However, unforeseen circumstances increased the cost of the project and caused changes to be made. Decisions were then taken without informing or consulting the Collective. Further discussion time was needed to analyse the building project in depth. Did Emmaus Rzeszów rely too heavily on the lorry loads of donated goods? There was undoubtedly a need to ask more questions about funding at that time. The Collective meetings are not simply a chance to chat and spend time together. **Support is needed in addition to providing funding.**

Areas for improvement

- **Analyse projects in greater depth** When a project is highly ambitious and/or is changed significantly, a small group would be formed to assess and support the project and help draft reports. The Collective is too large a group to consider a project in depth.
- Is there a need to **create a mechanism that would terminate a project** as soon as it is deemed a failure?
- **Take on board the recommendations made by the Collective and/or refusals to provide funding by the governing bodies.** It is easier to get back on an even keel a project that is underway than to manage the repercussions once it has been completed.
- **Freely draw inspiration from partners and ask them to provide their know-how.** The Emmaus Movement has significant know-how, expertise and human resources and this can be mobilized quickly.

3. 2017 European solidarity programme – potential funding applications

Reminder of how the annual European programme works

- The European groups will be invited to submit their applications for support for their 2017 projects from late October to 14 November.
- On 9 December, the members of the Regional Executive will select the projects to be presented to the RCEE on 17-19 February 2017.
- The Emmaus groups in Europe will then be informed about the 2017 programme initiatives. The programme relies on everyone's contributions.

The Polish and Ukrainian groups were invited to present the projects they wish to submit for regional funding in order to discuss them beforehand with the partners.

Nasha Khata talked about several simultaneous projects for 2017:

- **Build a well** to supply the house with water. The water used at the present time comes from the neighbouring association's well and contains iron and clay. Furthermore, that well does not provide a continuous supply to meet all of Nasha Khata's requirements, notably water for the farm animals. An engineer has been asked to carry out a study. The cost will depend upon the depth of the well and whether the water needs to be treated. (For example: the Nazareth well is 60m deep. Every metre costs €33). The group already has a rainwater collection tank but it is just used when carrying out work. Collecting rainwater is not a common practice in Ukraine; sometimes there is no rainfall for two months at a time. It was suggested that Nasha Khata prepares a project with two scenarios: one including a water treatment system.
- **Funding for the three salaries** of €250 each per month. This equates to an annual requirement of €9,000 to enable the community to carry on operating.
- **Support for the farm and farming project.** The group is managing to cover some of the cost of hiring machinery and a tractor and renting land but the sum of €2,000 still needs to be found.
- **Other projects mentioned**
 - Raise awareness about the 13 collection containers so that more clothing can be collected. The group is looking for a new shop (the current one is 30m²).
 - The upholstery and furniture restoration workshop is up and running, thanks to the training offered by Emmaus Oselya and the machines and furniture obtained for the carpentry workshop. However, the group needs a minibus for transport.
 - Renovate the lounge, hall, three rooms and repair the garage roof.

It was suggested that Nasha Khata considers its priorities and approaches Oselya for help with this initiative.

Brat Albert is planning to submit a solidarity initiative focusing on modernizing the homeless shelter's facilities in Nowy Sacz. The project will involve renovating the bathrooms and

extending the shower area and dressing room. The aim is to find hardwearing materials able to withstand heavy use. The group will cover the cost of most of the work, but a funding application will be made to Emmaus Europe for around €2,500. The group is going to try to approach the local council but it is hard to predict their reaction.

Is it worth investing in this project before the decree imposing conditions is published? The decision should be taken in the next month, so the standards will be known.

Emmaus Lublin will not submit any projects for funding but wished to make it known that if a group is changing their car, they would be interested in receiving the old vehicle.

4. Developments following the World Assembly - Act Emmaus - bringing alive our heritage and showcasing our current initiatives

In 2017, the 10th anniversary of Abbé Pierre's death will be the chance for the Emmaus Movement to remember his struggles and showcase the Movement's values.

The Act Emmaus project is based around a website. A first section will explore Abbé Pierre's struggles, utilizing written texts, photos and videos from the archives, and will also include a fun "What makes an activist?" exercise, to be completed either alone or in a group setting.

A second section will focus on collectively choosing a number of initiatives linked to Emmaus International's current focus areas. Photos and/or videos can be published on the site in just a few clicks of the mouse.

Phases

- Set up a dedicated Facebook group and send practical user information to the groups.
- All the Emmaus groups worldwide will be invited to publish photos and describe their practical initiatives. No criteria have been set for these initiatives, the aim is to showcase the sheer range of initiatives and show that the struggles are still topical.
- 12 initiatives will be selected based on what the groups decide. A report will be arranged for each of them. The launch of the first one is scheduled for 22 January 2017.

5. Regional assembly outcomes and feedback about the Regional Council of Emmaus Europe

The work done by Emmaus Europe was talked about within the framework of the implementation of the action plan approved in a vote at the regional assembly and in conjunction with the World Assembly resolutions. Regarding the circular economy, contact with politicians and monitoring of the amendments and the upcoming publication of *The Emmaus groups in Europe - championing alternatives for a circular economy* resource were mentioned.

Work underway on the issue of migration stemming from the Collective and the stated desire to join European networks were also mentioned: Migreurop, Feantsa and RReuse.

The next *Emmaus in all of its facets* training course was also mentioned. It will be held in Cologne on 13-16 November.

Working groups have been or will be created in the Regional Council in order to continue the work on practically implementing the work areas.

The next collective meeting will be on 16-17 March 2017 in Lviv, Ukraine, hosted by Oselya.

The participants were thanked for their contributions, following a closing round-table session.