



Type of structure: Residential community offering shelter and support.

Number of people: Roughly 60 people, of whom 31 are male companions (two are retired), nine female companions, eight volunteers and 12 paid staff members.

Year the group was founded: 1958

Leader: Samuel Chevieux

Group activities: Collecting furniture and clothing, selling, producing cloths.

Year when the group started its environmental practices: Textile collection via clothes bins placed in Geneva started in 2001.

Environmental initiative leader in the group's day-to-day life: Everyone



CONTEXT

The community owns four buildings: an accommodation building for the female companions, a 500m² accommodation building for the male companions and one store on 1,500m². The town of Carouge donated the building that is now the group's shop. The former shop was knocked down and the current car park was built in 2000. 39 people live and work on the same site (30 male and nine female companions). Companions have their own bedrooms but share toilet / shower facilities. The buildings also have common areas: a refectory, kitchen and a veranda with a view of the 300m² garden. Two new areas were created so that each of the companions could have their own room in the future.

- ❖ Means of transport used by the group: Public transport and six trucks and vans for collections.
- ❖ Insulation: Double glazing and roof insulation in the buildings. Renovation work had to be done in order to bring the insulation into line with standards. Following the fire in 2005, the opportunity arose to redo the roof of the male companions' accommodation building. In early 2011, the female companions' accommodation building was re-roofed.
- ❖ Type of heating: Fuel oil and solar panels for hot water for the accommodation areas, kitchen and refectory.
- ❖ Type of fuel: fuel oil.
- ❖ Specific town / region / country context:
 - Emmaus Geneva does not receive any state funding. However, it does work in partnership with the city's public bodies.
 - Federal laws governing waste sorting are very strict. Consequently, waste reception centres have become stricter and more aware about waste recovery. Things are changing year on year. If waste is not painstakingly sorted, the Emmaus trucks are not allowed to enter the waste reception centre. Associations are not charged for this service. This is why we must play the game and sort effectively. Efforts are made to separate goods and materials as much as possible.

❖ Group-specific context:

Geneva is a well-off city. When diplomats and staff from international organisations leave, they donate everything to Emmaus. Despite a slight drop in quality, the community receives a lot of donations, and enjoys quite a high profile among the population and antique dealers.

Abbé Pierre used to visit Geneva at least twice a year. These regular visits encouraged politicians.

THE EMMAUS MOVEMENT: A WELL-ESTABLISHED STAKEHOLDER IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL SECTOR DUE TO ITS ACTIVITIES

❖ Types of activities: Collection/sorting/selling

- Goods are collected from people's homes and people drop them off at our premises. Six trucks collect goods: three mainly pick up furniture and domestic appliances (average of four tonnes a week) and three others collect the clothing left in the city's clothing donation bins (280 bins). These bins provide 30 tonnes of textiles a week, which are taken away every week in two 15 tonne trucks to a partner in the Zurich region, who buys all the collected textiles. In total, our trucks travel 7,000km a month. The workload is constant.



- Secondhand stores' opening hours: Monday to Friday from 1.30pm and Saturday from 9 am.

General public environmental awareness raising work

- ❖ Open days and occasional events have been organised to date. For example, on Saturday 9 July 2011, a game of petanque and a barbecue were organised for the whole community.

- ❖ Emmaus Geneva publishes a newsletter every three months. The newsletter is circulated to 1,000 customers and is also put on display in the shop entrance. A donation form is also attached to the newsletter. Cash donations are received by the community as a result.
- ❖ Articles occasionally appear in the press.
- ❖ Lobbying: Emmaus Geneva recently got involved in pleading the case of a Kosovan whose refugee status had been withdrawn by the state and who was being told to return to Kosovo. The man's children had been in school in Switzerland for 15 years. An article appeared in the newspapers, politicians were lobbied and, in the end, the Kosovan was not forced to leave Switzerland. Emmaus Geneva is not very politically active, however when asked, the community is keen to take part.

ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY PRACTICES CHAMPIONED ON A DAILY BASIS AND THAT CONTRIBUTE TO OUR IDEAL OF COMMUNITY LIVING.



Waste

- Waste sorting: Metals (we also separate different types of metal), paper, household waste, bulky waste, furniture.
- Plastic is not used: we recycle used bags.
- Waste is reused: we have an agreement with a reinclusion school located in the neighbourhood. The teacher and his class come to hunt through our skips. They recover items and make artworks and ornaments from them.

+ Reusing plastic bags is financially beneficial. Customers are asked to bring their own bags.

- Quality control at the waste reception centre is becoming stricter meaning that the group has to spend more time sorting waste.



Water

- Everyday steps to reduce water consumption
- Recycle cleaning products, such as washing powder.
- Washing machine set to save water. No choice.

+ Avoid disposing of cleaning products in the natural environment.

- Water is freely available in Switzerland. It is therefore difficult to raise people's awareness about the issue. Cold water is supplied for free and tap water is of good quality. People only pay for hot water.

- The companions ask for bottled water. This may be due to the fact that in their home countries, people do not usually drink tap water.



Food

- The group receives and consumes donations of Fair Trade food.
 - Seasonal fruit and vegetables are promoted by Partage, which redistributes them. The products are repackaged in chilled lorries.
- + This practice limits waste. Saves money. Partage makes deliveries to Emmaus Geneva based on the orders placed each week, which also limits wastage when purchasing food.

Results

40 pallets from the Sharing Saturday days for Emmaus Geneva.



Housing

- Double glazing was installed when all the windows were replaced (building work lasted two months).
- Thermostats in the buildings enabling heat to be conserved.
- The roof of the women's accommodation building has been insulated: a construction company did the work for free. The company was celebrating its 100th anniversary just at the time when the community requested a quotation and offered to do the work for free: remove the roof tiles, reinsulate the roof and fit windows on the roof. The building work lasted four months. The copper piping in the roof is cleaned out once a year.

+ Fuel oil saved, as less is used due to the thermostats. Lower energy bills at the end of the year.

- Fuel prices increasing globally.



Transport

- Train pass. CHF30 for holidays.
- We walk / cycle short distances, for example to go to the post office and to the community.
- The community wanted to switch to biofuel. A study was conducted on ecological grounds because it is not worthwhile from an economic viewpoint. The outcome was that the community did not switch to biofuels.



Purchase of consumables

- Reuse goods such as stationery, kitchen utensils and crockery.
- We take steps to avoid waste.
- An electrician repairs secondhand items.

+ Minimises waste.



Energy

- Low energy light bulbs: when traditional light bulbs need changing, they are replaced by low energy bulbs.
 - Solar panels, funded by the state, with the aim of reducing consumption. Contracts were signed with the companies that fitted the solar panels. They come to check, clean and descale the piping. This service is included in the maintenance contract. A budget of CHF 10,000 for the roof and panels (not including any unforeseen expenses).
- + Improved awareness about switching off lights. Sometimes the economic aspect can help to make people aware about the environmental and financial impact and to get them to take responsibility.
- When people don't pay the bills, it is hard to get them to take responsibility. The companions are not sufficiently well informed about the work to be done.

Group environmental awareness raising

At Emmaus Geneva, State level changes in this area are gradually becoming apparent. In addition, the waste reception centre is currently being privatised.

For both these reasons, the community is realising that it needs to be better informed about recycling. This means that the group is having to become more aware both on economic grounds and in order to avoid additional costs.

NETWORKS AND PARTNERSHIPS

- ❖ **The PARTAGE association** – the Geneva food partnership collects and redistributes over 10 tonnes of food and toiletries every week to charitable organisations from the area. Emmaus Geneva was involved in the creation of *Partage*. www.partage.ch/ *Partage* organises 'Sharing Saturdays' twice a year in Geneva. 280 pallets of produce from the main food companies are collected on these days. Waste is also put to good use: damaged fruit and vegetables are prepared and then composted. Packaging (cardboard boxes, paper and plastic film) is sorted and disposed of at recycling or incineration centres. Surplus bread is ground down and is used as farm animal feed.
- ❖ **Grouping of organisations for clothing, textile and footwear recycling in the district of Geneva.** The grouping brings together Caritas, CSP, Terres des Hommes and the Salvation Army. Emmaus Geneva is tasked with collecting the textiles left in the clothing donation bins throughout the district. Profits are shared by all the member organisations. The grouping divides the profits by five and pays CHF 21 centimes per kilo. In addition, Emmaus Geneva receives some of this sum in return for its daily collection work.

- ❖ With the **children's judge** to take in young people and enable them to pay their debt to society by working at the community. Conscientious objectors have the option of doing their military service at Emmaus. They are paid CHF 10 a day with the state paying the rest. A maximum of three young people come to the community at any one time. Nevertheless, the amount of applications varies and lengths of stay are also very variable (ranging from a month to a year).
- ❖ **Texaide**, the most modern sorting centre in Europe! They reuse 95% of the materials collected. Only 5% is not reused. Find out more: www.texaid.ch
- ❖ **Pharmacie du cœur** collects medicines that can still be used. The medicines collected in the community are given to the organisation and will be resold for CHF 10-20. (www.redcross.ch/data/dossier/24/redcross_dossier_24_82_de.pdf)

DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS AND PLANNED ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES

For your environmental activities

- ❖ For textiles, the collection equipment is provided by the company that purchases the clothing from the community. However, the clothing donation bins are not solid enough and are regularly forced open. This leads to quite a significant loss in terms of clothing collection. A foundation from Geneva offered to manufacture a new clothing donation bin prototype, which has already been installed in the city itself. They are willing to fund the entire network. Emmaus Geneva will become the co-owner with the textile coordination grouping. Annual costs will be cut and the group will be able to charge more for textiles (target price of CHF 35 centimes per kilo).

For your environmental practices

- ❖ Plan for 2012: fit solar panels to produce electricity with the option of selling back electricity to the grid as the law requires such systems to be connected to the grid. The energy generated will be deducted from the electricity bills.
- ❖ Plan to replace windows in the shop that have not yet been replaced, taking into account insulation.

SHARING YOUR EXPERIENCE *(Interview with Samuel Chevieux, the community leader, on 13 July 2011)*

What have been the benefits of these environmental practices / activities for your group?

"Savings and some of us have become more aware."

Do you think that Emmaus has an environmental role to play?

“Yes, because of the recycling and sorting work that is done.”

Do you think that Emmaus has a role to play in galvanising society about this issue?

“By setting an example, we get people used to sorting and, going even further, we get people to take responsibility from an environmental standpoint. Emmaus informs and raises the awareness of donors and customers by explaining how selective sorting is done. People who are finding it difficult to manage their own possessions and don’t know how to get rid of them come to Emmaus rather than dumping unwanted goods in the street. This is why Emmaus has become a key player: the general public comes to Emmaus for advice, as we give things a fresh lease of life through our work. In this way, the world of Emmaus contributes a lot to society. In addition, with what we do, we provide people with a living without asking anything of anyone. The companions are also congratulated and thanked for their work and the city is cleaned, which means that we gain the council’s recognition. Emmaus Geneva receives no funding and supports itself solely through its recycling work, yet it is very successful.”

What common basis would you define for the Movement for environmental issues?

“Recycling and giving items a new lease of life.”

Has the companions’ environmental awareness grown? (Any concrete examples?)

“People are generally becoming more aware. At the outset, everything was thrown away, but now people tend to ask, “how should we dispose of...?”

The companions are proud of what they do. Some sort as they have to recover batteries, without necessarily realising why it is worthwhile, while others learn to see goods in a new light.”