



Emmaus and the environment: the current situation and future prospects in the European groups

CONTENTS

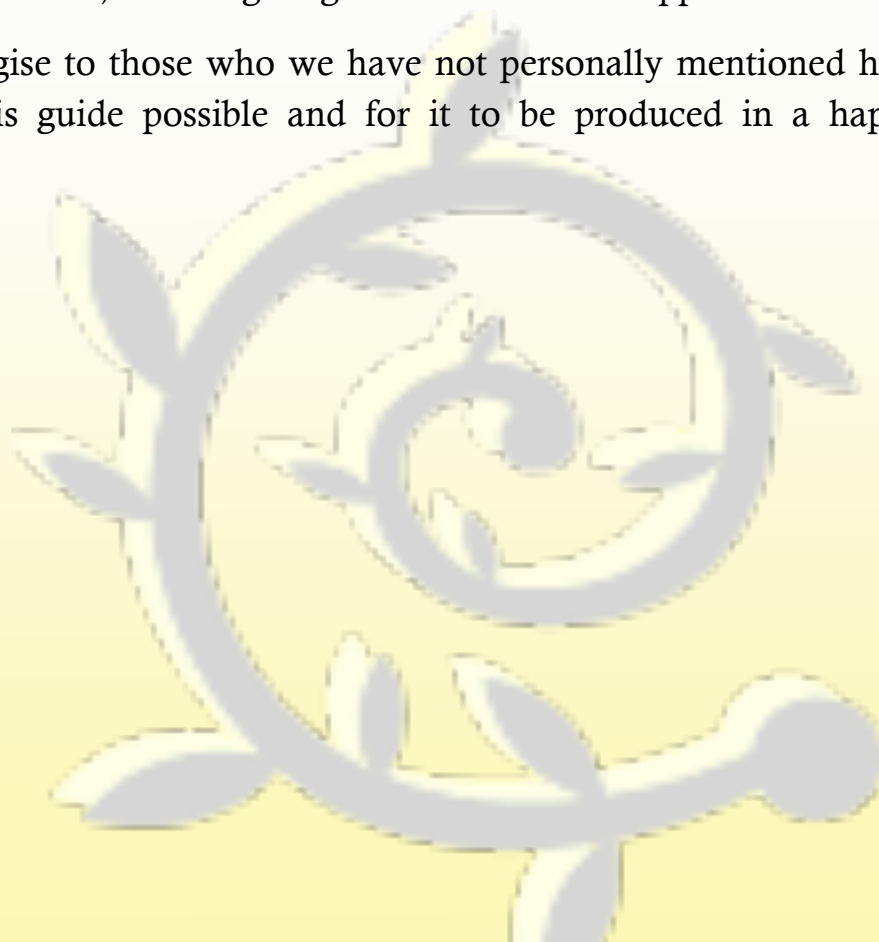
1. President of Emmaus Europe's message: What role can Emmaus play in developing a social and environmental alternative?.....	p.4
a. Emmaus and the environment: what are our common values?.....	p.6
2. Creating a practical social and environmental alternative:	
a. From rag picking to recycling: Emmaus and waste management.....	p.7
b. Changing the way we consume energy.....	p.13
c. Improved buildings making for a better living environment.....	p.17
d. Water: public property, not a simple commodity.....	p.21
e. The issue of food.....	p.23
f. Transport and travel in the context of Emmaus.....	p.27
g. Assessing progress areas.....	p.30
3. "Let us say what remains unsaid.".....	p.32
4. Developing alternatives together.....	p.34
5. The environment: a challenge for society.....	p.36
6. An anthology of our discussions on the environment.....	p.42
7. Is protecting the environment an investment?.....	p.44
8. Further reading: bibliography and internet resources.....	p.46

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to warmly thank all the groups and people who we visited in order to conduct the survey of environmental practices, all the groups and people who sent us their responses to the questionnaire and all the people who we interviewed for the guide.

We particularly wish to thank Julio, Ulla, Alain, Gianni, Lydia, Virginia, Jacques, Bernard, Berni, Jos, Matteo, Kase, Jacek, Patrick B., Olivier, Pierre, Jean, Willi, Pascale, Franz, Elli, Christelle, José Maria, Andony, Simon W., Philippe, Francesco, Javier, Renzo, Silvana, Marguerita, Kamel, Angela, Olatz, Begonia, Jacky, Frédérique, Gélou, Stéphanie, Gorka, Irune, Anne, Freddy, Simon G., Alma, Robert, Dave, Thierry, Françoise, Marja and Marie-Claude, Léa for giving us their time and support.

We also wish to apologise to those who we have not personally mentioned here but also helped to make this guide possible and for it to be produced in a happy atmosphere.



What role can Emmaus play in developing a social and environmental alternative?

1. *Apart from dealing with emergency situations, Emmaus should seek to encourage a long-term process of reflection.*

The environment is an issue for Emmaus: not just in terms of climate change or damage to our ecosystem (with these issues sometimes seeming very abstract and distant from our everyday lives to many of us) but **also because of the impact these changes will have on the lives of the poorest people, whose numbers continue to grow inexorably, both now and in the future.** The land will dry out, sea levels will rise and natural resources (water and fossil fuels) will only be accessible to a rich minority. **The Emmaus Movement is therefore completely justified in calling for an in-depth debate on the links between lifestyles, the environment and social issues, as this issue is clearly political and not solely technical.**

The values of solidarity and simplicity, defended from the outset by Abbé Pierre, offer the basis for an alternative to modern-day society, which is founded on competition, predation and destruction. Within Emmaus people often think that solidarity and helping the most deprived members of society are not linked in any way to conserving the ecosystem. **However, a fairer world cannot just be promoted by dealing with emergency situations. Attacking the root causes of extreme poverty, inequality and injustice has no impact if we do not reflect about the meaning of our long-term initiatives.**



2. *Is Emmaus an environmental stakeholder?*

Has not a society in which humans are subjected to economic “constraints” and a society which destroys its environment in the name of trade gone truly haywire? In response to worsening poverty in our ravaged world, we can endeavour to **develop alternatives** and put forward a different social model. Living in a different way, trading based on other principles and **fighting for a world steeped in ideals** is still possible.

For 60 years Emmaus has been heavily involved in addressing the root causes of extreme poverty and is

a movement that seeks to **promote a fairer world by placing human beings at the heart of society.** Everything is being done in the Movement launched by Abbé Pierre to improve the situation of those sidelined, excluded or destroyed by society. From the outset Emmaus has endeavoured to “recover” and “recycle” the humans that society has thrown away. **Collecting and recycling unwanted goods** is one of the ways that the Movement has gone about it, **with this work enabling us to collect funds to give the “most disadvantaged members of society” the means to regain the dignity that society has taken away.**

Times and fashions change, and our recycling work has made the **Emmaus Movement** a recognised player in the fight against waste, an **environmental stakeholder** involved in reuse and recycling.

Although **these activities** significantly reduce the impact of over-consumption on our immediate environment by limiting the quantity of waste that is

simply thrown away and then destroyed, they **only take place at the end of the cycle and at the margins and do not address the causes of the problem**, as the Movement has in fact sought to do on other issues since it was founded. Indeed, our discourse does not really call into question the consumer society or the waste that it generates. We help make the system “greener” through our waste work and we acquit ourselves well, **without ever really questioning this society, which is based on objects and humans becoming obsolete.**

3. What do we want?

The environment is now one of the Movement’s official concerns due to the emergency climatic – and media – situation. These themes, and specifically the issue of degrowth, have punctuated many debates, from those at the Sarajevo World Assembly in 2007 to those held more recently at the Regional Assembly of Emmaus Europe in 2009, without a real stance on these issues being identified. The questions could be posed in the following terms.

- Do we want to simply become **sustainable development stakeholders** like others? **Making small changes for show to our work** would enable us to **surf on this green wave and would be a way of gaining recognition from public stakeholders and civil society**, without really having to call ourselves into question or change our culture.

- **Or should we decide to commit to developing an alternative way of life, thinking and acting, not because it is fashionable, but instead based on our ideals?** This commitment would be timely, as it would involve **taking into account issues that nowadays have become insurmountable, while really calling into question our ways of thinking and existing.** Solidarity must involve reflection on international and intergenerational sharing of available natural resources (water, fossil fuels, air and land) and on developing a way of life based on these considerations, which would therefore be simpler and more environmentally-friendly. Building a

socially responsible world today involves making major changes to our lifestyles just so that everyone can live.

4. What is the current state of play?

Emmaus can help develop a real alternative to today’s world. Increasing numbers of Emmaus groups are looking into their environmental impact and are wondering how to make improvements in line with the ideas being generated by this process. The ground was prepared at the Lisbon work camp in 2008 for a discussion of potential environmental initiatives that can be implemented by the groups. Despite these efforts,

today we are not necessarily aware within the Movement about what neighbouring groups are doing. **Potential alternatives already exist**, even if they do depend on circumstances. **Initiatives run in all the groups of the European Emmaus Movement have been listed here in order to foster these dynamics and engage a political discussion on the meaning of solidarity in Emmaus against the background of the end of this world of abundance.** This guide aims to publicise these initiatives in order to inform, encourage and challenge. We must continue learning to learn from others’ experiences and carry on developing an alternative way of life, which is sustainable because it is environmentally-friendly, and is based on sharing, solidarity, living together and helping each other. We must continue to address **all** the root causes of extreme poverty because a different world IS possible.

The president, Julio de la Granja



“How would the prospect of putting a stop to what is known as “growth” be bearable, without them losing their temper, to those who do not have the bare minimum, unless they could see many of those who do have the basics, voluntarily and willing saying to them, ‘we are doing this so that you too finally have enough because we now want to work together with you.’

Our Emmaus communities, in the current context, in the face of this call for change, can and must be truly great in their smallness, even though they are so small.”

Abbé Pierre, Easter, 1977....What we can do

EMMAUS AND THE ENVIRONMENT: WHAT ARE OUR COMMON VALUES?



The picture illustrates the key words used when preparing for the RAEE 2009 workshops on degrowth and sustainable development.

CREATING A PRACTICAL SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ALTERNATIVE FROM RAG PICKING TO RECYCLING: EMMAUS AND WASTE MANAGEMENT



For over 60 years Emmaus has been recovering what other people throw away in order to help the most disadvantaged members of society. The concept of “**helping to help those who suffer most**” has been put into practice for over half a century through this **recovery, dismantling and repair work which gives the unwanted goods a new lease of life, while those involved in this work find that it marks the beginning of their own “reconstruction”,** as repairing goods helps them to repair themselves.

Times and fashions change and we have switched from being **ragpickers (rag picking is known as *biffe* in French) to sustainable development stakeholders who work in recycling and reuse.**

We have moved from rag picking, which is considered to be a marginal activity, to having a cutting-edge role, as we are in the “vanguard of reuse”, recovery and “secondhand goods”.

In a society based on overconsumption, goods become obsolete as a matter of course, so managing the end of their life cycles is a problem. **Emmaus quickly found itself to be involved in this sector, not as an end in itself, but instead as a way of raising funds to reduce the suffering of the poorest people.**

Everyone is responsible for two things in life: wanting to know and daring to speak out.”

Abbé Pierre

¹ In old French, *biffe* refers to the work of ragpickers, who collected items that had been thrown away.

How does our waste management work take into account environmental issues?

Our very existence is sometimes based on the paradox of making our living from overconsumption and from goods that people throw away although they are still of use. Although we may criticise to some extent this vicious circle which causes great poverty, we are nevertheless involved in a range of processes that manage these unwanted goods in a more sustainable way, and we cushion the consumer society's impact on the environment.



The ragpickers at work: Emmaus' roots

Emmaus is now a waste reduction and reuse stakeholder



Emmaus Bougival (France), sorting skips which will be taken to the waste reception centre

Since the late 1990s sustainable development has become a European issue. Consequently, **a range of measures aiming to prevent the production of waste through recovery, recycling and reuse have been put in place.** The transposition of these directives into national law has led to the setting up of infrastructure that sorts and processes waste with greater precision. In many European countries the Emmaus groups have carved out an important role for themselves in final waste quantity reduction activities.

WASTE RECEPTION CENTRES MANAGED BY EMMAUS

For example, since 2001 Emmaus Angers (France) has developed a partnership with the Angers Loire Metropolitan Area. The group set up and manages free-of-charge a waste reception centre for the community on its site and in exchange its non-recyclable waste is taken away for free. The waste reception centre has ICPE status² and uses a relatively sophisticated sorting system. The group is **working actively on projects to cut the amount of final waste and is considering the idea of setting up an additional sorting platform** to reduce the amount that is still buried in landfill or burned.

This type of system has also been set up by other Emmaus groups (Cologne – Germany and Norges – France). Most of the time these projects are **run as inclusion schemes, offering a new start to the long-term unemployed (Cologne – Germany) or enabling new posts, which until then had only been occupied by companions, to be created (Norges – France).**

² Classified facility for environmental protection purposes.



Emmaus Angers' eco-recycling centre

These activities developed by the Emmaus groups have a **real impact on the environment.**

The very thorough dismantling and sorting work carried out at the waste reception centre in which Emmaus Cologne has been participating since early 2010 **enables 70% of what is brought to the centre to be recycled.**

Some groups are not involved in local waste reception centre management but instead have **forged partnerships with existing structures**, enabling them to place a container in the centres.

People who come to the centre have the option of placing unwanted goods in the container. They are advised by the staff, with employees, companions and staff raising their awareness. These schemes help to increase the amount of goods collected by the groups and also help to prevent waste (Emmaus Longjumeau – France and Emmaus Haarzuilens – the Netherlands).



Repair workshop, La Poudrière – Belgium

REUSE ACTIVITIES

Many European Emmaus groups have created unwanted goods repair and reuse centres.

- In the **Ekocenters** created by the Emaüs Fundaciòn Social San Sebastian – Spain, employees on inclusion programmes repair goods that have been collected and create new objects using items that are no longer fit for use. These items are then sold in the stores located in the centres.
- Emmaus Avenir – France has also developed an **eco-recycling centre** based on the same model: **all the unwanted goods are collected, sorted and then repaired or dismantled (depending on whether they are still fit for use) on one site.**

Both projects seek to reintegrate unemployed people into the job market and to train them in new trades (for example, at San Sebastian employees learn to sew so that reclaimed materials can be reused). **Reuse work of this kind is very developed** in most of the European Emmaus groups which have workshops in which companions and / or employees on inclusion schemes **repair unwanted goods in order to give them a new lease of life.**

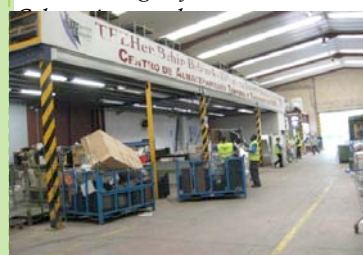
Many groups also have carpentry workshops and repair large domestic appliances and IT equipment (Emmaus Bougival and Emmaus Angers – France, Emaüs Pamplona – Spain). In some groups, including Emmaus Fiesso in Italy, specific items such as old wood-burning stoves or cookers are repaired and then resold. Emmaus Krefeld (Germany) is involved in various projects via its participation in the Ansonst association, which brings together organisations that recover and resell secondhand goods. One of the group's projects is a bicycle workshop in which employees on inclusion programmes repair and resell secondhand bicycles.



Sewing shop, Irun Ekocenter,



Sorting of different types of glass in the recycling centre managed by the Köln Möbellager of which Emmaus



Traperos de Emaüs, Pamplona: sorting and reuse centre, WEEE storage area



Repair workshop, Fiesso - Italy

Structuring the waste management industry

*The Emmaus groups in France took steps to safeguard their waste recovery and reuse activities in response to the waste management industry being structured at national level in Europe. They have consequently become recognised players for environmental issues and more specifically for waste. The first example of this structuring process is the setting-up of a specific **waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) sector**. Changes to legislation brought about by the transposition of the **European directive on WEEE** have stopped communities from dismantling domestic appliances in order to recover raw materials.*



WEEE collection skip, Emmaus Haarzuilens, the Netherlands



WEEE storage, Irun Ekocenter, Emmaüs Fundaciòn Social, San Sebastian – Spain

What are WEEE?

European directive 2002/96/EC makes it compulsory to recover WEEE. It establishes the principle of producer responsibility. The directive defines WEE as “equipment which is dependent on electric currents or electromagnetic fields in order to work properly and equipment for the generation, transfer and measurement of such currents and fields and designed for use with a voltage rating not exceeding 1000 Volt for alternating current and 1500 Volt for direct current” in categories specified by decree.

Some WEEE contain dangerous substances and must therefore be cleaned up before being reprocessed. If these WEEE are taken to a landfill site or incinerated they can generate toxic emissions in the air, water and soil, which are dangerous for humans and / or the environment. Many parts of WEEE can be recovered, which helps to preserve natural resources and limit the amount of waste being buried in landfill or incinerated.

A LOOK AT THE SITUATION IN EMMAUS FRANCE

The French Emmaus groups organised themselves to get the specific nature of the movement's work with this type of waste recognised in order to prevent their recovery and reuse activity disappearing. This activity was a source of income but above all provided work for a considerable number of companions, with the groups' capacity to take in people to some extent depending on it.

1/Lobbying to publicise Emmaus' role in waste management and obtain the status of a credible environmental player.

2/Developing an internal stance on this issue: in order to safeguard collections from private households and recovery work, the groups agreed to stop dismantling equipment. This led the groups to **step up repair work and put back into circulation more of the appliances that are collected.** Emmaus **has become a reuse stakeholder and recognised player through this initiative.**

In addition to focusing work on these specific activities, the ethos was switched from dismantling to more stringent sorting of the different materials and appliances so that dismantling work can be delegated to specific **eco-structures**¹, tasked with dismantling and recycling electrical and electronic appliances.

¹ Ecostructures collect and process WEEE on behalf of scheme members. The ecostructure accreditation procedure is set by a decree passed on 23 November 2005. <http://www.prorecyclage.com/filieres/deee/eco-organismes.html>

STEPPING UP AND EXPANDING THESE SORTS OF INITIATIVES

The structuring of the industry and the transposition of the European directive into French law via decrees have enabled the **movement's core mission (providing support and shelter) to be preserved and by extension the work done by group members, which helps them to rebuild their lives**, and which has turned into a more skilled job based on waste sorting and repair work. Moreover, the formalisation of the industry, which is recognised in law, has given the groups a new source of income, as an eco-tax has been created to compensate for the loss of income from the resale of raw materials. The law is based on the principle of **greater producer responsibility**¹: a tax is paid when new electrical or electronic equipment is purchased in order to fund the end of its life cycle (recycling and reuse etc). The tax goes to the groups that collect and sort this type of waste.

The same type of legislation and delegation of work has been put in place in most European countries, including Belgium and Spain, where the San Sebastian and Pamplona groups are working actively in this area.

A number of processes are in place today to supplement the industry structuring dynamic. The European Emmaus groups are now seeking to **improve their ability to put a figure on their reuse work** in order to reinforce their role as credible players. A range of techniques are used with companions who carry out repair work noting down all the appliances that are refitted in notebooks in order to **keep track of their work** (Emmaus Bougival - France) and others putting in place **sophisticated traceability systems** and conducting research programmes, funded notably by the European Union, using new technologies, in particular RFID tags, to monitor the appliance throughout its life cycle (Emaùs Fundació Social San Sebastian).

The experience gained and the recognition obtained due to its practical contribution to industry development has enabled the movement to become a key waste management player. The French groups used this experience to take a stance, beginning in 2005², on the implementation of a **textile contribution** to fund textile sorting platforms, whose income was dropping dangerously due to a reduction in textile quality.

¹ For the past 15 years, European and national environment policy on waste has been based on the principle of extended producer responsibility (EPR), which means that producers are responsible for their products when they come to the end of their life cycles <http://www.actu-environnement.com/ae/news/2074.php4>

² http://www.lerelais.org/IMG/pdf/La_Contribution_Textile_Environnementale-1.pdf

RFID (radio frequency identification) is a method that remotely records and recovers data using tags, which are known as "labels". The RFID tags are a nanotechnology application and among other functions enable miniature IT components to be produced and therefore a large amount of information to be stored in tiny tags. The information can be remotely read as it is transmitted by radio frequency. The tags can be incorporated into an object, product or living being. The stated objective is to provide full traceability of the tagged human, object or product and a large quantity of information which can be easily and remotely accessed.

<http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radio-identification>



The European Life project supporting the development of electrical and electronic waste traceability, Emaùs Fundació Social, San Sebastian – Spain.

These experiences make the Emmaus Movement in Europe a recognised environmental player and more specifically for waste management and above all waste reuse. This is a major issue at a time when the European waste directive must be transposed into the national legislations of each European Member State. The Emmaus groups need to do a significant amount of work to ensure that the application of the directive does not change their activities.

Reducing waste at source

*While the European groups have become recognised reuse, recycling and waste prevention players, **dealing with waste in our daily lives is also a major issue.** The Emmaus groups work downstream from waste production in society and reduce its impact on the environment through recycling and reuse. **It is therefore important to call into question the production of items that are destined to be thrown away.***

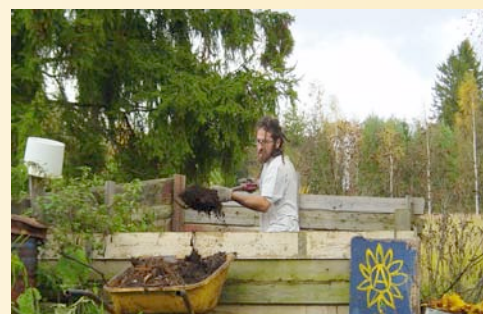
*The groups hold little influence over the production of the waste that they process as part of their work, so it is **vital that we call into question the waste generated by each group in its everyday life.***

INITIATIVES

- Most of the groups are trying to set up a **waste sorting process** (including La Friperie Solidaire, Alfortville – France, Emmaus Haarzuilens – The Netherlands, Emmaus Cologne and Emmaus Krefeld – Germany, Emmaus Village Carlton – UK, the Emmaus groups in Finland, Emmaus Svalorna, Vaxjo, Akvarn Bjorka – Sweden) but it is sometimes complicated to organise. Emmaus Rzeszow (Poland) is currently working on this issue and has made it a priority goal for 2010.

- In order to cut the amount of waste that is incinerated or sent to landfill, many groups have set up **composting systems**, with this method reducing the amount of waste thrown away and also producing rich compost to fertilise gardens (La Poudrière – Belgium, Emmaus Haarzuilens – the Netherlands, Emmaus Ferrara - Italy and Emmaus Akvarn- Björka). Others give green waste to the group's goats, hens or pigs (Emmaus Fiesso – Italy, Emmaus Neuilly-Plaisance—France and La Poudrière – Belgium).

- As part of the same waste reduction ethos, most of the European groups have chosen to stop using plastic water bottles (Emmaus Marseille Pointe Rouge, Bourgoin Jailleu and Elbeuf – France).



Compost, Emmaus Jokioinen, Suomi



Inclusion scheme employees producing fabric bags: an Emaüs Fundaciòn Social San Sebastian initiative.

Initiatives have been set up to put an end to the use of plastic bags in order to raise secondhand store customers' awareness about waste:

- La Friperie Solidaire – France has decided to recover all the plastic bags found when sorting or collecting goods so that they can be reused. Emmaus Neuilly-Plaisance, also in France, has been considering the same sort of solution since the group became aware that a “sixth continent of plastic is in the process of forming at sea”.

- Emaüs Fundacion Social San Sebastian and the Roanne Committee of Friends have designed a **series of reusable bags using tarpaulins and recycled textiles** which are then sold in the secondhand stores. Plastic bags are no longer given to customers.

CHANGING THE WAY WE CONSUME ENERGY



Just like in the rest of society, the issue of **energy use** in the Emmaus groups is often only tackled from an **economic perspective** and is just seen as **a means of running the group's activity**. However, the **growing scarcity of natural resources** (energy and other resources), which feed industry and our entire lifestyle, will **put an end to the period of abundance** during which the energy issue did not need to be raised, as energy was considered to be infinitely available.

Oil crises, peak oil¹, climate change, unequal distribution of resources and the fact that part of humankind is being exploited in order to extract its energy resources all force us to consider changing how we consume energy and switching to more sustainable options. Our consumption of fossil fuels cannot continue to increase or even remain static if **we are to avoid irreparably damaging the biosphere's natural capacity to renew itself**. We now need to **contemplate cutting our use of fossil energies**.

Emmaus groups often do this by installing renewable energy production units. This investment in costly energy systems (solar photovoltaic panels, wind turbines, wood-fired and solar heat boilers) must go hand-in-hand with tangible **energy efficiency** (use of techniques adapted to the context enabling the systems to work as efficiently as possible) and **energy simplicity** (reducing energy consumption through energy-saving measures and by reflecting on energy use) **measures in order to set in motion an alternative energy management approach**.

¹ ¹ Peak Oil refers to the point in time when world oil production will peak and then will start to drop due to useable oil reserves running out. The phenomenon was highlighted by the American geologist Marion King Hubbert in the 1950s. Some scientists are convinced that we are currently in the peak production period and that we will soon enter the period of decline, whereas others believe that the peak will be reached in the next few years. However, they all agree about the imminence of the phenomenon.

Energy efficiency and simplicity: the first steps

How can we consume energy differently? How can we consume energy more efficiently instead of looking to produce more? Consuming energy differently should lead us to reflect in-depth about how our daily practices use and waste energy. What do we really need to consume? Can we not do away with some expenditure? How can we reduce our consumption in must-use areas? The non-consumption of energy through energy efficiency or simplicity measures is therefore the first form of saving to consider.



Sign to raise people's awareness about saving energy, Pamplona (Spain)

A FEW EXAMPLES

Running an **energy-saving awareness raising initiative** is therefore absolutely vital if we are to change **energy consumption habits**.

- Emmaus Rzeszow in Poland notes down its **electricity consumption every day** so that the group can analyse changes and see the effect of efforts it makes to cut energy expenditure.

- Other groups have decided to change all their light bulbs and instead use energy-saving bulbs (Haarzuilens - the Netherlands).

- Turning off lights and closing windows to prevent energy wastage (Emmaus Fribourg – Switzerland).

Becoming aware of everyone's contribution to overall energy consumption and **raising awareness about the issue** is of crucial importance, as it is difficult to grasp the impact of your choices or actions when costs are shared and do not directly affect each individual.

Simplicity and efficiency - what do these concepts actually mean?

The Negawatt association

(<http://www.negawatt.org/telechargement/Manifeste%20nW%20v2.pdf>) has drawn up nuclear power shutdown scenarios while setting itself “factor four” as the objective (reducing greenhouse gas emissions four-fold by 2050) and has highlighted the fact that 70% of our current energy consumption could be saved by implementing energy saving and simplicity measures. The remaining 30% of our needs could be met by renewable energies. The *Virage Energie Nord Pas de Calais* (<http://www.virage-energie-npdc.org/>) association has drawn up the same sort of scenario for the Nord Pas de Calais region of France (an English language summary is available on the website). These studies help us to understand that a different energy model is possible if we rethink our energy expenditure and our relationship with energy.

The French SOS Familles association works on raising the awareness of people who turn to the group because they are heavily in debt.

Indeed, **energy expenditure is often one of the contributing factors to the financial difficulties** experienced by families living in poorly insulated and poorly adapted homes.

Analysis of energy bills and awareness raising about ways of reducing consumption enables the families to reduce the amount of money they spend on energy.

Using ethical energy – an indirect form of solidarity

Although some Emmaus groups have opted for electricity supplied by alternative suppliers from renewable sources (Emmaus Haarzuilens - the Netherlands), few groups have chosen to abandon the standard power suppliers.

However, **cooperatives that resell and increasingly produce renewable electricity** are flourishing in Europe, such as Enercoop in France, Ecopower in Belgium, and Elektrizitätswerk de Schönaue in Germany. **These energy choices may seem unconnected with Emmaus' core concerns. However, they express a form of indirect solidarity which has a noticeable impact.** Opting for this type of energy means that you are supporting tangible alternatives to centralised energy production using fossil resources (oil and nuclear power).

Choosing to abandon fossil energies means that you are committing to a more **local form of production** that encourages **local autonomy** and independence from the major groups, but above all means that you are **supporting sustainable electricity production methods that are not based on exploiting workers¹ and natural resources**, the extraction of which pollutes and reserves of which are dwindling.

Emmaus Ferrara (Italy) is planning to become an electricity producer by investing in a wind turbine. The group will then sell the energy that it produces. Moreover, as an experiment and as a flagship learning project, the group wants to construct its wind turbine itself out of wood.

Alternative energy suppliers very frequently use a **cooperative** model, which enables each client who so wishes to become a cooperative member and therefore take part in decision-making in the cooperative. This makes opting for an alternative power supplier a truly positive ethical choice.

European green energy supplier websites:

Belgium <http://www.ecopower.be/>

Germany <http://www.greenpeace-energy.de/> <http://www.ews-schoenau.de/>

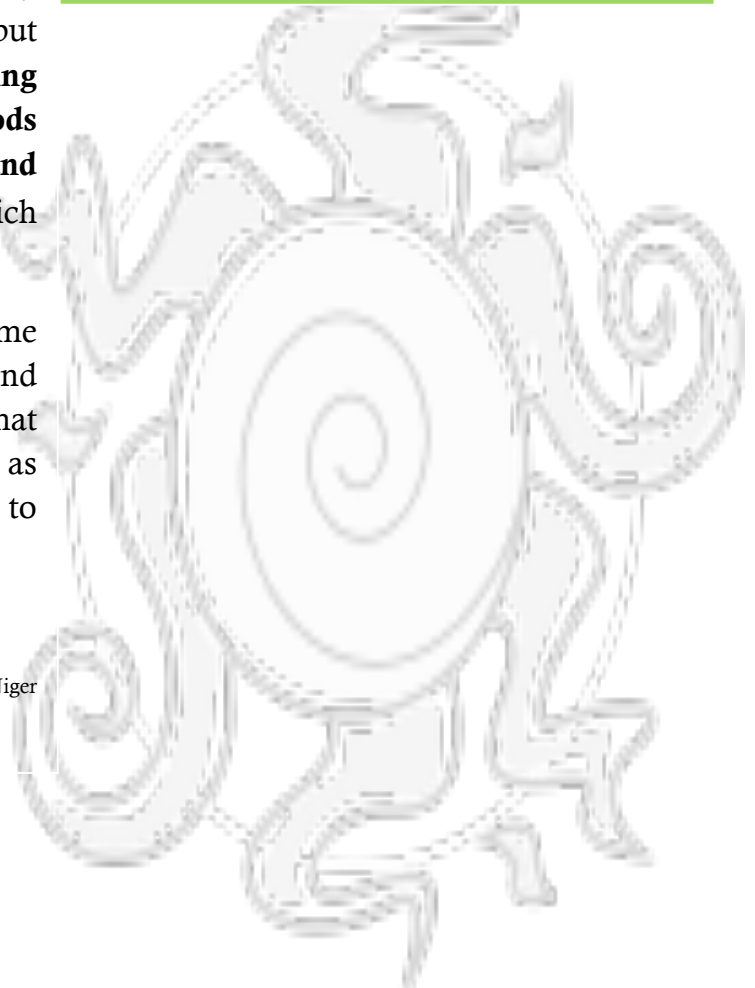
France <http://www.enercoop.fr/>

Netherlands www.greenchoice.nl (not a cooperative)

Spain <http://www.enercoop.es>

UK http://www.energy4all.co.uk/energy_home.

¹ Exploitation of the Tuareg community in the uranium mines in Niger
<http://areva.niger.free.fr/>



Moving towards energy independence?

Many Emmaus groups have decided to invest in renewable energy by **installing their own energy production units**.

- **The use of wood-burning boilers**

is very widespread in Emmaus groups in Europe. Boilers are a source of **inexpensive and environmentally-friendly heating** for many groups once the initial investment has been made. The wood used comes from:

- Furniture which is no longer fit for use (La Poudrière - Belgium).

- Wood chips, pellets or shavings (Emmaus Angers – France, Emmaus Ticino – Switzerland and ISF- Bosnia).

- Wood cut by members of the group (Emmaus Saintes – France).

- A considerable number of groups have also opted to **install solar panels in order to heat their water**. Emmaus Cambridge (UK) has fitted panels to its new building and is planning to fit them on all of its available roof space. In France, Emmaus Norges has around 20 panels that cover about 1/3 of its hot water requirements. In Spain, Emmaus Pamplona has 15 solar panels which heat up to 1,500 litres of water. Groups often decide to combine solar panels with a wood-burning boiler which compensates for the lack of heat during the winter months.



The fire that heats the whole community house (Ferrara – Italy)

Moreover, in Europe many groups have decided to install solar photovoltaic panels due to the increase in the number of subsidies (tax breaks) on offer to those who install renewable energy production units. Groups receive a return on their investment over a 15 year period due to the energy buy-back rates currently in force.¹ For example, the **solar photovoltaic panels** at Emmaus Villafranca (Italy) meet all of the site's electricity needs. If the group does not directly consume the energy it produces, it enables it to fully offset its electricity consumption with the energy it sells back to the grid.

Many other groups run this sort of scheme (Emmaus Bristol - UK, Valence – France, Etagnières – Switzerland and Cuneo - Italy). It provides the groups with an income and at the same time constitutes a real commitment to the environment.

¹ The European states have implemented attractive buy-back tariffs in comparison with the market price in order to promote the development of renewable energy, enabling a relatively quick return on investment, depending on the type of production. This website lists prices for self-produced electricity in all the European countries <http://www.energy.eu/#feedin><http://www.energy.eu/#feedin>



Solar photovoltaic panels on the roof of Emmaus Villafranca's secondhand store (Italy)

IMPROVED BUILDINGS MAKING FOR A BETTER LIVING ENVIRONMENT



For a long time, the Emmaus groups had an ethos based on **building quickly and inexpensively** in order to cope with emergency situations and house as many people who were experiencing difficulties as possible. The companions' living conditions and the working conditions of those involved in the groups were therefore relatively precarious for a long time.

Many European Emmaus groups are now confronted with the challenge of **improving the group's quality of life, providing better accommodation for companions and adapting their premises to their work and community living**. Run-down, small and unsuitable buildings need to be renovated. This constitutes an opportunity to **have a global pre-build approach**.

Decisions taken prior to construction work will therefore be key to the life – and end of life cycle – of the building and in the building. Increasing numbers of European Emmaus groups are **looking into building accommodation and other types of buildings**. The movement boasts wide-ranging experience in this area.

Building a sustainable house

A bioclimatic house is energy-saving because it is well planned, insulated and positioned, uses healthy, non-polluting and efficient materials, and is designed with the wellbeing of its inhabitants in mind. It fits naturally into its environment. This construction method is becoming more widespread.

Some Emmaus groups have started to reflect upon the construction of their buildings in order to achieve the best possible quality of life for occupants and have the lowest possible environmental impact.

A HOUSE BASED ON BIOCLIMATIC PRINCIPLES

Emmaus Pamplona in Spain sought to build its community house based on these principles.

The house was therefore designed to **capture as much light as possible in winter** by placing most of the openings on the south side of the building. Different types of sun shades have been installed including vegetation, a pergola and an overhanging roof, to **protect the building from the summer sun.**

Natural insulators – cork from the Iberian Peninsula - a natural local resource selected to cut mileage and processing and to avoid the use of polluting products, was chosen and installed. The cork is **thick enough** to effectively insulate the house and reduce heating requirements as much as possible.

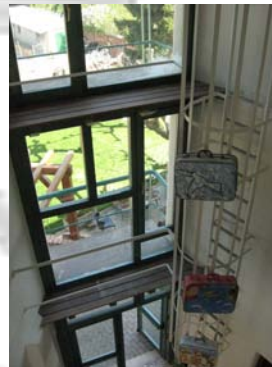
A **green wall** is currently being created in the hall to cool down the atmosphere.

A **green roof** insulates the house from seasonal heat and cold and also has a very positive impact on rainwater infiltration and in terms of preserving biodiversity.



North side: smaller openings. The green roof (Pamplona, Spain).

The south side of Pamplona's house has large openings but is protected by sun shades so that heat and light can be controlled depending on the season.



Bay window alongside which the green wall will be placed (Pamplona – Spain).

Political and solidarity issues relating to construction

The Fondation Abbé Pierre (France) works on substandard housing among other issues. The foundation endeavours to work on the issue of energy insecurity through its **social housing construction support programmes.**

Its *2,000 roofs for 2,000 families* programme provides backing for projects that offer low rents, green designs (particularly for insulation and heating) and personal support. **This initiative aims to cut energy expenditure at source in order to reduce the energy insecurity of the families in question and links up the social and environmental aspects of the issue.**



Emmaus Haarzuilens' community house (Netherlands): wooden structure with a green roof.



Emmaus Ferrara's house in Italy – building insulation was a key issue.



Emmaus Angers – France: “social housing” built in a circle with insulation being an important consideration

COMMON IDEAS ABOUT INSULATION AND CONSTRUCTION METHODS

- At Emmaus Haarzuilens (Netherlands), the community house was **built out of wood and has a green roof**.
- At Emmaus Angers (France), Emmaus Ticino (Switzerland) and La Poudrière (Belgium) during renovation work, and Emmaus Cambridge (UK) and Emmaus Ferrara (Italy), the issues of **building insulation and direction were explored in depth**.
- Emmaus Norges (France) is planning to build wooden chalets with mêtisse or hemp insulation.
- Emmaus Rzeszow (Poland) has had **windows fitted in its store so as to increase natural light** in order to reduce its electricity consumption.
- The Relais Atlantique (France) is planning to construct its future work building based on certain environmental criteria (wooden structure, south-facing and **mêtisse insulation**).
- Emmaus Marseille Pointe Rouge (France) is considering rebuilding its store **entirely out of wood** incorporating renewable energy in the project.

Building a place for living

The quality of life enjoyed by a building's residents primarily depends on the way in which the building was designed and the **common areas** that have been included. This is key to making a building a place of wellbeing and interaction and a living space in which residents feel happy and can develop as people. Common areas play a very important role in the Emmaus groups. Creating common areas for socialising must not be sidelined when reflecting on environmental issues, with this particularly being the case in the **context of Emmaus, as offering shelter and support is our core occupation**.

Abbé Pierre believed that to address the root causes of poverty we must start by offering **everyone a place to live where they feel safe and at home**.

A feeling of privacy and a pleasant warm ambiance are an integral part of this ethos of people rebuilding their lives and of providing a place in which everyone can find the resources they need to feel better.

Building shape and colours also play a very important role. Emmaus Angers in France has built a “neighbourhood” of rooms in a **circular building which looks out onto a central green space where residents can meet**. The use of warm colours and the decoration at Pamplona (Spain) makes the house **warmer and more welcoming**.



Outdoor recreation area, Emmaus Cologne, Germany



Emmaus Haarzuilens, lounge / meeting room layout



Emmaus Angers (France): a

Environmentally-friendly construction using reclaimed materials

BUILDING CHALETS FROM PALLETS

The Emmaus Avenir¹ association, working in partnership with the architect Jean-Pierre Le Bail, launched a “Europe” pallet homes construction scheme in 2007. Via the “inclusion projects” scheme, the chalets are built by companions who gain construction skills from the experience. These wood framed houses are insulated with cellulose wadding and are quality low-cost homes. The stated aim is to offer a long-term solution to the problem of substandard housing by providing quality homes that comply with comfort and environmental standards.

The pallet building process is currently being certified by the CSTB². The certification will give the process legal recognition and will mean that it can have the different sorts of insurance needed to obtain more public procurement contracts.

¹ The project is also supported by Emmaus Neuilly-Plaisance and Neuilly-sur-Marne and the Emmaus Association.

² Scientific and Technical Centre for the Building Industry: the CSTB is tasked with conducting research and analysis and disseminating knowledge about construction materials. <http://www.cstb.fr/>



Chalet made out of pallets, Neuilly-Plaisance community



Companions building a pallet chalet



Mëtisse panels ready to be used

Le Relais is a network of enterprises with a socio-economic aim. It uses economic activity to combat exclusion by creating sustainable jobs. The companies primarily collect, sort and recycle textiles and are also involved in manufacturing paint, packaging, temporary inclusion contracts and social housing. Le Relais is a member of Emmaus France and carries out initiatives in France and Africa. <http://www.lerelais.org/>

MÉTISSE – AN INSULATING MATERIAL MADE FROM RECYCLED TEXTILES

Mëtisse is an insulating material made from recycled textiles. The material was invented in partnership with an engineering school which helped Le Relais¹ to design the product and carry out the necessary trials. Mëtisse was created three years ago and is currently being certified by the CSTB. Certification will enable the material to be chosen for regional authority public procurement contracts. Mëtisse was created in the Emmaus Movement and combines several traditional activities: **reuse and recycling**, as mëtisse means that 10-15% of the unusable textiles, which would have been incinerated, can now be used, and also helps the poorest people, as Le Relais, an **inclusion company based on a cooperative model**, employs people who are experiencing major difficulties in their lives. Finally, as a healthy and long-lasting insulator, mëtisse constitutes a step towards implementing more environmentally friendly practices in the movement's work.

WATER: PUBLIC PROPERTY, NOT A SIMPLE COMMODITY



“Today, over 1 billion people do not have access to drinking water and over 2.4 billion do not have adequate sanitation.¹”

Emmaus is looking at water usage because **many groups in Europe and around the world strongly defend the belief that water is public property and must be kept as such, and that everyone should be guaranteed equal access to it.**

Drinking water is a resource that is becoming increasingly scarce and the situation is likely to worsen due to climate change and increasing pollution of water sources. Many European groups are involved in the Lake Nokoué programme in Benin. The programme aims to facilitate drinking water access for a community living on the lakeshore, as the lake water is polluted and is therefore unusable. Being involved in this international solidarity initiative encourages us to reflect on the everyday water management methods in our groups in order to bring our practices into line with our discourse.

Raising awareness about water usage

In today's world only things that have a price are of any value.

Only things that can be traded are therefore protected or worth protecting. However, natural resources, particularly those used to meet everyone's basic needs, cannot be subject to trade and market mechanisms. Drinking water is therefore public property. Everyone should have equal access in good conditions to water without money or any other form of access restriction being imposed by a minority. Allowing this essential life-giving resource to be monopolised by multinationals and letting the price of water increase due to it becoming scarcer, and continuing to pollute and destroy drinking water resources would directly lead to some of the world's population being denied the right to live.

As a result, the fight to ensure that water remains public property is one of Emmaus' main campaign issues today.

ALL THE EMMAUS GROUPS ARE FOCUSED ON WATER

The Emmaus groups around the world are very involved in awareness-raising about water usage and about water being public property. The initiatives run by the groups every year on World Water Day (20 March) bear out their concern. **World Water Day initiatives include:**

- **A water bar** in the secondhand stores to make customers aware about the issue of **consuming tap water** (Emmaus Neuilly sur Marne in France and Emmaus groups in Italy).
- Publicising **Emmaus' Lake Nokoué initiatives** via an exhibition about the project, debates, press releases and screening of the *Nokoué, the water companions* film (Emmaus Iasi – Romania).
- **Supporting the Lake Nokoué project** by redistributing takings from the sales held on World Water Day (Emmaus Helsinki, Aaland and Jokioinen – Finland and Emmaus Fribourg and Jura – Switzerland).
- **Initiatives aimed at the general public:** switching off public fountains (Emmaus Angers – France), a discussion meeting about water (Emmaus Lublin – Poland), placing stickers on public fountains and pouring brown-coloured dye into water to raise society's awareness (Emmaus San Sebastian – Spain).

The awareness raising campaigns are accompanied by a process of reflection in the group themselves, with many groups **switching from drinking bottled to tap water in order to boycott the multinationals who are monopolising water**. Similarly, a large number of meetings are held to **encourage people to take responsibility for their own water consumption** (Emmaus Fiesio – Italy, for example).

Emmaus also focuses on how to preserve water

Simple water-saving measures are put in place encouraging everyone to reduce the amount of water that they use: dual-control toilet flushes and water-saving devices and pressure reducers on taps (Emmaus Norges – France). These measures are sometimes accompanied by **rainwater collectors for the toilets or for watering the garden** (Emmaus Pamplona – Spain: the 5,300l rainwater collection tank fitted on the roof of the community's work premises covers 30-40% of the site's water needs). At Emmaus Ferrara in Italy, **water used to flush the toilets comes from a well**.

Some groups also run initiatives aiming to limit water pollution. **Using green household products** helps to limit the impact of everyday activities on water, as water quality is constantly being worsened by the chemical products that we use (La Poudrière – Belgium and Emmaus Haarzuilens – Netherlands).

Some groups (Emmaus Feniks – Netherlands and Emmaus Iasi – Romania) have decided or are planning to install **dry toilets**. Although this initiative requires intensive awareness raising and reflection within the group, it has a truly positive impact in many areas. Emmaus Iasi installed dry toilets several years ago and is very pleased with the system.

THE ISSUE OF FOOD



Enjoying a good quality of life and living independently are issues that have a direct impact on the daily lives of the Emmaus groups. Bringing our day-to-day practices into line with our discourse on solidarity and the fight against the root causes of extreme poverty is a form of commitment.

Using and promoting healthy good quality food can be an objective for the Emmaus groups.

Food production switched from traditional farming to being an almost industrial-type activity over 50 years ago¹: **the living and working conditions of farmers are becoming increasingly insecure, land fertility is in freefall and the amount of chemical products being used is seriously harming biodiversity**, the food on our plates is more and more dubious and health scandals caused by industrial farming are on the rise (mad cow disease and bird flu).

How did we get to this point? The industrialisation of growing methods has destroyed traditional techniques that were tailored to each type of land or region and the widespread use of pesticides, fertilizers and nowadays of GMO - genetically modified organisms – is jeopardising the future of flora and fauna. The imposition of these methods all around the world by the requirements of international trade has been a factor in the destruction of local food-producing farming, which used to guarantee the independence of entire populations.

Calling for a different kind of farming that rejects industrial processes and respects human beings and the environment, in the widest sense of the term, is not just one of the options open to us; it is now a necessity.

¹ Two recent films provide more information about the havoc wreaked by intensive farming and the application of international trade rules in this area: *Solutions Locales pour un désordre global*, by Coline Serreau and *Food Inc.*, by Robert Kenner.

Producing your own food

FROM VEGETABLE GARDENS TO FARMS

For a number of reasons many Emmaus groups in Europe and worldwide have decided to produce some or all of their own food.

Apart from this being a green and ethical choice (organic farming and local seasonal produce), this type of initiative helps those who work in the vegetable garden to rebuild their lives. The long-term commitment required helps them to gain in self-confidence and feel more capable. In addition, planting a vegetable garden and farming is a not insignificant way of **ensuring independence and autonomy** while also being a positive ethical gesture if the group is rejecting intensive agricultural production.

La Poudrière in Belgium obtains a significant amount of its food from one of its branches, the **Rummen farm**, where six people live. The farm and the orchards, which enable La Poudrière to produce and **sell its own apple juice**, produce fruit and vegetables for the whole group.

Emmaus Feniks (Netherlands) and Villafranca, Ferrara and Fiesso in Italy all have **large vegetable gardens that produce all or some of the vegetables that they need**, at least from March to November. Moreover, these communities also **breed** animals (including pigs and hens) which are used to feed the group. The International Solidarity Forum in Bosnia, meanwhile, has developed a series of structures to feed the group: **orchards, a cheese dairy and greenhouses which help the group to function** and involve the people who live there in an activity that at least guarantees them a source of income. Un coup de main d'Emmaus Iasi (Romania) has developed a major semi-organic farming project, which produces all the group's food in the summer months, and also hosts **organic farming training courses** in partnership with a university.



Companions picking apples at La Poudrière (Belgium)



Animal breeding, a Coup de Main d'Emmaus Iasi, Romania

Groups in Asia have been reflecting on the importance of organic farming for several years.

Kudumban in India has a 15ha organic farm containing three nurseries. The farm also produces a significant quantity of fruit and other subsistence crops. The farm is also a sustainable farming training centre aimed at farmers and NGOs. The VCDS and FHF groups in India also focus on these issues, as they produce a range of products that they then sell on the local markets.



Fiesso vegetable garden (Italy)



Part of the farm at Feniks, Netherlands



Villafranca vegetable garden,

Opt for local and ethical products

PROMOTING FAIRER TRADE IN EMMAUS

Many Emmaus groups pay particular attention to the origin of the products that they consume, whether for ethical or environmental reasons.

The **leading ethical product** consumed by the European Emmaus groups is **Fair Trade coffee**, which is popular all over the region. Some groups, such as the Emmaus Foundation in San Sebastian and Emmaus Ferrara and Emmaus Cuneo in Italy, go even further and have decided to sell Fair Trade products in their stores in order to encourage a more ethical form of trade.

Similarly, several groups have decided to join a **cooperative** that promotes organic and/or local farming and fairer trade (based on environmental and social criteria), with this being particularly prevalent in Italy, where this type of initiative has been in existence for a long time.



Fair Trade products sold at Swallows
Lund - Sweden

Our food has a significant impact on the environment.

It accounts for close to 20% of greenhouse gas emissions. Food production has an environmental impact at the growing (pesticides and soil erosion, for example), processing, packaging, storage and transport stages of the process. Some foodstuffs, such as imported or out-of-season fruit and vegetables and meat have a particularly high impact. For example, for every kilogram of beef eaten, the whole production process generates the same amount of greenhouse gas emissions as going on a 70km car journey! If we opt for veal instead of beef, the total rises to 220km.

Source: <http://www.rac-f.org/DocuFixes/ges-dans-nos-assiettes.pdf> (Réseau Action Climat, Des Gaz à Effet de Serre dans nos assiettes).

The decision taken by some Emmaus groups to look into their day-to-day consumption has also led to them **including organic produce in their daily diets**. This practice is spreading in certain groups. Some groups have gone vegetarian (Emmaus Helsinki – Finland) or are seeking to produce some foodstuffs themselves, such as bread and cheese, in order to achieve ethical and environmental objectives.



Bread making,
Emmaus
Ferrara, Italy



Direct producer to consumer selling systems are called **local distribution circuits**. They may involve a farm shop, a produce box subscription scheme (AMAP in France) or indirect sales via a producers' cooperative.

The aim of this type of circuit is to cut the number of intermediaries between the producer and consumer.

This helps to reduce the number of food miles and to prioritise better quality agriculture by guaranteeing producers a better income.

http://www.arehn.asso.fr/dossiers/circuit_court/index.html

EMMAUS' INVOLVEMENT IN LOCAL DISTRIBUTION CIRCUITS

Networks of **local distribution circuits** can be developed more informally by forging links with **local farmers and producers**.

Emmaus Krefeld (Germany), Emmaus Haarzuilens (Netherlands), Emmaus Marseille Pointe Rouge (France) and La Poudrière (Belgium) all opt for local seasonal produce.

These groups seek to **prioritise the economic fabric and local production**, whether they are buying vegetables, fruit juice, meat or cheese, **which helps reduce the number of intermediaries and cuts the miles that food travels, and favours quality**.

Developing local socially-responsible networks often forms the basis for this type of approach with good relations with a neighbouring farmer or the loan of a truck sometimes being at the root of a relationship that enables the group to change the way it eats.



Changing the way that we consume may sometimes seem to be unconnected with managing emergency situations in the Emmaus groups. However, making a change in this area is a strong solidarity commitment and can therefore be considered to be a political objective: championing an alternative way of consuming and therefore fighting a global economic system based on exploiting producers and the land.

Emmaus Navarra's organic fruit and vegetable baskets (Spain)

Emmaus Navarra is seeking to further develop this system. Instead of just supplying the group, a **seasonal organic locally produced fruit and vegetable basket system has been put in place**, with the produce being sold at a modest price.

The system was set up as a result of a partnership with a **cooperative of organic farmers**. The initiative is proving to be very successful within the group, as the number of employees buying the baskets is increasing. The fruit and vegetables are much tastier and of a much higher quality.



TRANSPORT AND TRAVEL IN THE CONTEXT OF EMMAUS



If any of the issues in the Emmaus movement could be said to be **thorny**, travel and transport would be the one. The movement developed based on the idea, among others, of **international solidarity**, which involves sending containers, mainly using HGVs, and also **container ships**. **Furthermore**, collecting unwanted goods from people's homes relies on road travel and uses fuel.

The movement's identity and operational methods are therefore very heavily dependent on using forms of transport that generate a lot of **pollution**: road transport for solidarity and our everyday work and air transport, very frequently, for all the international meetings.

Bringing Emmaus alive involves travelling and meeting with others. However, at a time when energy is becoming scarcer and expensive and when people are becoming more aware of the environmental impact of our journeys, it would be difficult to continue travelling so much without questioning the means of transport that we use and the reasons for these journeys.

Although this issue affects the very core of Emmaus' work and identity, it also concerns society as a whole. Can we continue travelling frequently without taking into consideration the impact of our journeys and the reasons for them? **Should we travel a distance of a few hundred miles by aeroplane for a meeting that will only last a few days or even a few hours?**

Rationalising and reducing our use of motor transport

Several groups have focused on the issue of travel and transport and have consequently decided to change their motor transport usage habits.

EMMAUS AND A GENTLER FORM OF TRAVEL

- La Poudrière in Belgium has decided **to heavily promote cycling for everyday local journeys**. The group decided to take this initiative a step further by discussing the form of transport it wished to use for the annual community holiday. Previously the entire community travelled to relatively faraway destinations in Europe in one of the community's trucks. In 2010, following long discussions in the group, a decision was taken to opt for a canal boat and cycling holiday in order to encourage a different sort of "change of surroundings", making for a holiday in the **local area but with a different relationship with time and distance**.

- Several groups are seeking to rationalise their everyday use of motor vehicles **by organising shuttles for journeys to secondhand stores and workshops located at a distance from the living accommodation (Emmaus Cologne – Germany and Emmaus Pamplona – Spain)**.

The issue of transport and travel is even more delicate for collections, as motor transport is needed.

- **In order to cut the amount of pollution generated by using trucks and the cost of using an excessive amount of fuel, many groups try to rationalise collections** (Emmaus Aurillac – France and the Roanne Committee of Friends – France).
- Emmaus Angers (France) has software enabling the community to group together collections as efficiently as possible.
- Emmaus Marseille Pointe Rouge (France) uses a GPS system to avoid pointless detours.
- Emmaus Parkwijk (Netherlands) is considering investing in trucks that run on natural gas so as to no longer depend on petroleum.

Transport accounts for around 20% of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. The figure is continuing to rise due to increasing numbers of cars, particularly in countries whose populations were previously unable to buy a car on cost grounds, and also because of the rise in air travel.

Travel will therefore be a major issue over the coming years. Apart from its effect on the climate, dwindling oil reserves will force us to redefine our relationship with travel.

Companions from La Poudrière – Belgium out cycling.



Bicycle repair, Emmaus Jokioinen - Finland

Reviewing long distance travel and transport

As we have seen, efforts are being made to change everyday travel habits, yet travel and transport is still a very sensitive issue within the groups and the Movement as a whole, as changing our practices involves a complete overhaul of our working methods.



Loading a container for Africa

How can solidarity initiatives be continued without us contributing to the destruction of the environment and consequently generating the extreme poverty of the future, which will be caused by environmental damage?

Rethinking our travel and transport habits may lead us to look into others forms of less direct solidarity which nevertheless have just as much an impact on extreme poverty. Could not initiatives that aim to change our lifestyle and reduce our environmental impact contribute just as much to international solidarity?

This sort of process of reflection would not aim to put an end to Emmaus' traditional solidarity initiatives but instead would seek to give them a different slant. Where exactly does the boundary lie today between initiatives that provide groups around the world with occasional help and a form of solidarity that involves us calling into question our practices and way of life, so that everyone can live in better and fairer conditions?

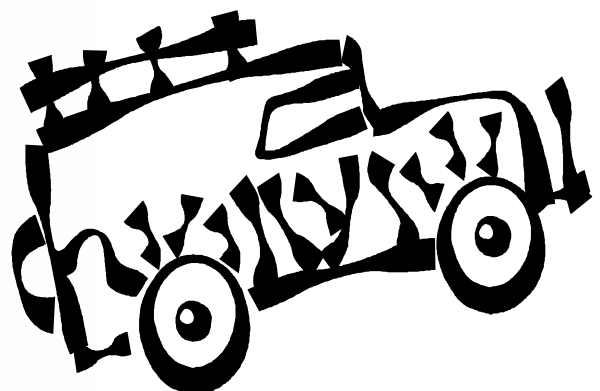
We could rethink our international travel and transport policy.

Could we not use rail instead of road transport when sending containers within Europe?

Could we not rationalise journeys to national and international meetings?

We could do this by reducing air travel as much as possible and switching to rail travel and by grouping together meetings instead of scattering them about. We could also develop Skype and telephone meetings and avoid travelling long distances for very short meetings or events.

We can use these ideas as a starting point for rethinking our international travel and transport policy. We have a long way to go in this area and transport and travel are major issues in our movement.



ASSESSING PROGRESS AREAS EMMAUS: A POLITICAL MOVEMENT

“The Movement’s mission is to perpetually remind individuals and society about the fact that there is no peace, feeling of completeness or joy, unless we first serve the most forgotten members of society and those who suffer most”, Abbé Pierre.

Emmaus is a political movement due to the values that it champions and defends and also because it seeks to address the root causes of extreme poverty and challenge society and politicians about these issues.

The aim of our political lobbying work is to bring about major changes to unfair laws, because **human rights count for more than laws.**

It is from this standpoint that Emmaus Europe is taking action today to lobby MEPs about the ongoing reform of asylum law which is calling into question the rights and dignity of migrants.

Awareness raising goes hand-in-hand with challenging society and the public authorities about issues relating to the work or values championed by Emmaus.

As the members of a political movement and in the name of the strong values that they defend, the Emmaus groups are becoming involved in local, national and European politics in order to champion these ideals and fight for rights and justice for all.

- The Italian Emmaus groups have been involved for some time in the **campaign to ensure that water remains public property.**

A major national campaign was run to fight water privatisation with the objective being to collect 500,000 signatures so that a people’s referendum could be held. The Italian Emmaus groups got heavily involved by organising various events designed to inform people about the issue and to collect signatures. The national campaign in which the Italian Emmaus groups played an active role collected over 800,000 signatures and therefore exceeded the number required to obtain a people’s referendum.

Emmaus Krefeld (Germany) is actively involved in local politics, **notably in groups that defend rights and democracy, fight fascism and campaign against the construction of a coal-fired power station in the region.**

The Pamplona group (Spain) is taking part in the **editing of a short magazine on degrowth** and is involved in a large number of events and discussions on the environment, if not as a group then via certain members of the group.

<http://decrecimiento-navarra.blogspot.com/2009/05/presentacion-publica-de-dale-vuelta-el.html>

How can we ensure that initiatives are successful?

If we want to conceive a more socially responsible, respectful and fairer world, everyone has the right to get involved in creating it, so that the new world suits everyone, and so that each individual feels truly involved.

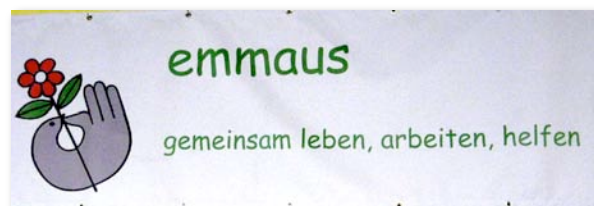
What human resources do we have available in order to set in motion an environmentally-friendly approach and to give impetus to a long-term sustained process of reflection in our groups?

This is even more of an issue when we are talking about the "ecological conversion" of a group (whether the group is an Emmaus group or some other kind of community). Developing a more environmentally-friendly lifestyle involves **making major changes to the way we think and act.**

A FEW INITIATIVES

Numerous initiatives are run by European Emmaus groups in this area. Some groups (Cologne and Krefeld – Germany and Haarzuilens – The Netherlands) **hold daily group meetings to organise the day's work.** All community members take part in the discussion and organisational process. Emmaus Cologne has also planned to hold **seminars on non-violent communication** in order to facilitate decision-making and communication between the companions and the companions and group leaders. Along the same lines, Emmaus Krefeld organises joint training sessions and sessions with a psychologist to work on "how to be part of a group" and with non-members of the community.

Encourage better communication so that everyone can take part in the group's decision-making process.



Emmaus: live, work and help together. This banner is displayed in Emmaus Cologne's store (Germany)

Should not living and working together also involve taking decisions together, while keeping in mind the Emmaus values and key rules?

The Emmaus companions: Some companions stay with us for a few months and others stay for life, either out of choice or necessity. Most of the time companions come to Emmaus because of major personal problems. The community endeavours to offer them the means to rebuild their lives by sharing its work and life and helping to help those who suffer most. Rebuilding your life involves **becoming aware of your capacity to take your own decisions and therefore to take part in decision-making in the group and in society as a whole.** The success achieved in the various projects in which the person is involved helps to reinforce the individual.

Offering everyone the chance to become involved in joint projects and to decide upon their direction helps them to become aware of this capacity and to strengthen themselves as people and also makes the life of the group vibrant and cohesive. However, involving companions in decision-making may sometimes seem complicated, as they all have different levels of involvement in the group itself and their knowledge of the movement and its values also

“Let us say what remains unsaid”

“Will this race, before it finally becomes ‘too late’, become aware and learn how to deprive themselves and how to be more generous, and be able to truly identify with those who suffer most, and willingly give enough, while running the risk of perishing together, to actually lay the foundations together for salvation?”¹

Abbé Pierre’s stance is even more meaningful over 50 years on in the context of today’s environmental crisis. We can now put it into perspective with the decision to discuss the issue of degrowth at the Sarajevo World Assembly in 2007. This decision shocked many of those in attendance; **degrowth is an “issue for rich people”** and referring to it within Emmaus would call into question the very idea of international solidarity which is at the heart of our Movement. However,

does not devising a real form of contemporary solidarity actually involve questioning our development methods and reconsidering the current model which imposes the forms of development that we see today? A world in which **80% of the wealth is concentrated in the hands of 20% of the world population** and a world in which a **European’s carbon footprint is over ten times bigger than that of an Indian²** is simply not sustainable and

it is **our responsibility to change it.**

The way of life in the world’s richest countries has been based on exploiting natural resources and human beings for over 50 years and the consequences of it can now be felt all around the globe. Pollution that seemed localised at the outset is now affecting the whole biosphere, everyone’s resources are running out and global warming is a truly “global” phenomenon. **Our excesses have meant that we have mortgaged everyone’s future and we must now put an end to this destructive way of life and encourage those who have “not achieved it” to not attempt to do so.**

Degrowth is not about worsening the extreme poverty of the world’s poorest countries or preventing the vast majority of the planet’s population from achieving “wellbeing”, far from it.

Degrowth is now more about reconsidering what we deem to be happiness or wellbeing. Is not the idyllic image of our rich societies promoted by advertising and films in fact just a delusion when we closely examine reality? Are we really happier for having accumulated objects that are destined to be thrown away as they always go out of fashion and are manufactured not to last? What are the consequences of these ways of living and producing, which are dying out, on the environment, society, on our working conditions and on the swathe of the world which does not benefit from the growth myth but instead suffers from it?

More growth and more production have never led to increased happiness for all but

¹ Abbé Pierre, *Horreur et honte (mais pour qui ?) d’être de trop*, April 1956.

² A carbon footprint is an estimation of the area required by one person to produce what s/he consumes and to absorb what s/he throws away. It is expressed in hectares, football pitches (more visual) or by the number of planet earths needed if all of humanity had the same footprint as the person being analysed. The carbon footprint of a group of people or all of humankind can also be calculated. The earth has 11.3 billion “biologically productive” hectares. They constitute its current “biocapacity”. If we divide this figure by the number of the earth’s inhabitants, this gives 1.7 – 1.8 ha per person. This is what the earth can fairly (and sustainably) give to each person. However, on average each person consumes 2.3ha. We are therefore already exceeding the earth’s biocapacity, as we are consuming more than the ecosystem can replenish. In other words, we are drawing on our reserves. Furthermore, it is particularly shocking to see

that consumption is very unevenly distributed. A European has an average footprint of 5ha, an American of 9.7ha and an Indian of 0.7 ha.
<http://www.ecoconso.be/spip.php?article472>

rather **entrapment in an endless cycle of destruction, frustration and injustice.** The capitalist model based on the myth of growth does not make people happy. Neither does it spare us from having needs: it destroys human beings and the environment, creates frustrations that consumption will never ease and generates poverty and exclusion.

Growth, the capitalist development model, only benefits the richest people, whether they are the richest in the world or the richest within a given society. The rest of the population tends to permanently be the adjustment variable, the victim of frustrations and false hopes linked to the myth of mass consumption, and the workforce that drives growth. Since the end of World War II, the need to keep growing has been cited as a way of reducing inequality: **however, countries' GDP has been growing immeasurably for 60 years, yet inequality and extreme poverty are both worsening.**

In response to the conclusive failure of this system, we want to affirm that **there is not one form of development and one model to be followed. Calling for degrowth is a way of providing options** so that each individual and each society can today develop their own alternative and opt for creativity and freedom, rather than being forced to follow the set stages of western-style development.

Our movement can represent an alternative and we can be one of these bastions of resistance and solidarity. We already share a way of life that differs from the one promoted by contemporary society, we call for sharing, solidarity, mutual support and we share living spaces and work to meet our needs and help the most disadvantaged members of society.

However, are we doing enough today to

constitute a real alternative? This guide presents a comprehensive series of environmental alternatives. These diverse and multi-faceted initiatives mark the start of **people within the Emmaus Movement becoming aware of environmental issues.**

However, we should be under no illusions, as this is a long process, which can be further stepped up. We must strengthen our initiatives and fuel our debate if, at this time of environmental crisis, we want to continue offering an alternative model and we want to challenge the rest of society about environmental issues. **Developing a coherent discourse so that we can challenge politicians and society as a whole about the need to take into account the environment does not just hinge upon us having solid environmental initiatives.**

This guide is a first step along the way. We have sought to **focus here on the Emmaus Movement.** We want to enhance our knowledge of our initiatives and learn from what our

neighbours are doing in order to promote these initiatives inside and then outside the Movement. This is just the first stage of the process. We need everyone's energy and commitment, we need to forge even more solid links between ourselves in order to become more involved and communicate better, and so that we continue learning and interacting. Solidarity is at the heart of Emmaus and sharing is a form of this solidarity. **We will be able to develop ambitious joint alternatives by sharing all of our initiatives and by continuing to learn from each other.**

This guide has prepared the ground and we must now reflect together on what Emmaus will be in a radically changing world.



DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVES TOGETHER



Wanting to change the way in which a group acts and lives involves everyone making an effort and taking part in all the projects that are set up. If all those involved in the group are not aware of the aims of a project that directly affects them and brings about changes to their living or working conditions, it is highly likely that **some individuals will put up resistance to the implementation of the project.**

Setting up environmentally-friendly initiatives within a group **is therefore not something that can be decided upon by just one person**, as these initiatives affect everyone's lives, will **change their habits** and will need everyone to be committed to moving in the same direction. It is vital that the entire group is involved in the initiative in question and in the preliminary discussions before the project is developed, so that they grasp why changes to their daily lives and habits are justified and can be beneficial for each individual and the group as a whole.

A large number of people are involved in Emmaus and they hold responsibilities and roles that are highly interdependent within each group, meaning that there is therefore a need to think about collective decision-making.

*“You are needed,
other people need
you. Not just
you, but you and
I, working
together.”*

Abbé Pierre

DECIDING TOGETHER

A meeting is held every Friday at Fiesso (Italy) in which everyone takes part. Everyone expresses their opinion, makes proposals concerning the decisions that the group needs to take and a vote is then taken. The group leaders take a final decision based on the opinion expressed by the group and, if necessary, once the decision has been approved by the board, which takes into account the opinions expressed at the weekly meetings.

How can we raise people's awareness about environmental issues?

Whatever the origins of the decision to make respecting the environment a real part of the group's life, it is necessary to inform the whole group about:

- ⇒ **The reasons for these changes.**
- ⇒ **Why setting up this sort of initiative, which may seem restrictive, is worthwhile.**

Making the **environment one of the key facets of the group's life** and taking it into account individually makes it necessary for everyone to become aware that **this affects them at their own level and also as part of wider solidarity and responsibility.**

Achieving this involves a long process, especially in the specific context of Emmaus, in which **dealing with emergency situations frequently has to be the priority**, and means that **there is little time left over for very long-term discussions and projects.** Installing solar panels or discussing their environmental impact is far from being a priority in many Emmaus groups.

The Lisbon work camp (October 2008) brought together participants from the four Emmaus regions for a week to discuss the theme of sustainable development. Each of the four regions chose a theme as a way of tackling the issue: water (Africa), the solidarity economy (Asia), the social aspects of sustainable development (Latin America) and degrowth (Europe).

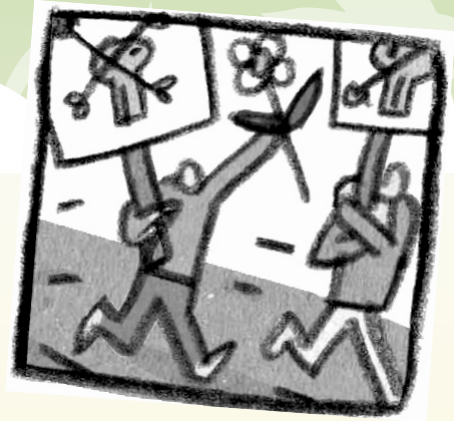
Each of the issues was examined in greater depth at theoretical or practical workshops focusing on the various aspects. The workshops resulted in a series of proposals made by the participants. In particular, they proposed that opportunities to meet and interact should be increased and reinforced and that tangible practical water and energy saving practices should be implemented in the groups.

An appraisal of Emmaus Caneças (Portugal) highlighting the group's strong and weak points was carried out by the participants accompanied by a sociologist. A DVD of this experience was sent to all the member groups and is still available today.

Some groups are reflecting on this and seeking to raise the awareness of all their members through a range of initiatives.

- Emmaus Rzeszow in Poland is aiming to raise the awareness of its companions about energy saving by **noting the community's daily energy consumption in order to be able to analyse variations based on the efforts being made.**
- Emmaus Cologne in Germany organises **numerous talks and activities on social issues and sometimes on environment-related subjects** (alternatives to nuclear power and renewable energies, presentation of how a solar oven is manufactured in Africa, outings to forests to help community members to learn to identify edible plants). These events are proving to be a big success with the companions and are also open to outside participants (friends or other people). This scheme helps the group to open up to the outside world.
- The Iasi community in Romania carried out **internal awareness raising about organic farming** thanks to a partnership with a French farmer who stayed with the group and helped it to plant semi-organic crops on plots of land belonging to the community. This initiative is now enabling the group to **run an extensive organic farming training project.**

THE ENVIRONMENT: A CHALLENGE FOR SOCIETY



Becoming aware of environmental issues is contingent upon developing a political project on these self-same issues. We must ensure that our practices and discourse are coherent in order to then be able to challenge society about these issues.

The environmental crisis concerns Emmaus but first and foremost it affects the whole world, and local initiatives should be part of an overall process of reflection on society and the system within which it develops.

In this light, developing environmental projects can be part of political lobbying and raising society's environmental awareness.

“Everyone is responsible for two things in life: wanting to know and daring to speak out.”

Abbé Pierre

Raising awareness about emmaus' work

Lobbying work involves the European groups joining activist and not-for-profit sector networks.

- Many groups are involved in **social and solidarity economy networks**. Emmaus Ferrara and Emmaus Villafranca (Italy) work with local Fair Trade cooperatives and Pamplona (Spain) is a member of a regional network that promotes the social and solidarity economy as a model (Red de Redes Economía Alternativa y Solidaria – REAS)(<http://www.economiasolidaria.org/>) and of another network that is more focused on waste (AERES) and campaigns for social and solidarity economy businesses to be awarded public-sector waste management contracts.
- Emmaus Cologne (Germany) is involved in **local networks**: in the Verbund Möbel Kölnerlager (<http://koelns-zweite-hand.de/>), the Emmaus group works alongside other local associations involved in the secondhand trade and in social inclusion work. Verbund Möbel Kölnerlager helps these associations to champion their cause more strongly to the local authorities and by doing this they have been contracted to manage a waste reception centre staffed by people on inclusion programmes.
- Emmaus La Poudrière in Belgium, through the *Ressources* association in which two members of the community participate, **lobbies the Brussels region authorities about the role of social enterprises whose work helps to prevent waste production and supports the most disadvantaged members of the community** (by creating jobs and selling goods at low prices). In addition, several campaigns on reuse and selling second hand goods have been run with this association.

The RREUSE network

Some groups are involved in the European RREUSE network. The network is an umbrella organisation for social enterprises with reuse and recycling activities and which consequently help to prevent waste. The network aims to bring together sector players and promote “good” sector practice by pooling and exchanging experiences.

Raising awareness about Emmaus' work

Initiatives that **not only raise people's awareness about the environment, but also inform them about Emmaus' work and role.**

- Emmaus Hagueneau (France) delivers **presentations in schools** in order to explain the waste sorting chain and skip management.

- Emmaus Etoile in Valence (France) runs an **agricultural festival weekend** to which organic farmers, Fair Trade craftspeople and performers are invited. This sort of event aims to showcase Emmaus' involvement in environmental issues.



Environment awareness raising room, San Sebastian, Spain



Fridge libraries located in public parks, Emaüs San Sebastian, Spain

Emaüs Fundacion Social de San Sebastian has set up an extensive environmental education project. An **environment resource centre** has been created in one of the group's Ekocenters in order to fulfil this objective. The aim of the centre is to enable people from outside the movement, notably children, to take part in a range of activities linked to the environment and Emmaus' work. For example, a workshop explains the recycling/reuse process and films on environmental issues and recycling are produced.

This awareness raising work is supplemented by the range of initiatives that the group runs outside of its walls: **for example, old refrigerators are reused and adapted so that they can be used as libraries in public places and analysing the content of rubbish bins with passersby** to demonstrate what could have been recycled and what has been thrown into a standard bin, organising reuse competitions etc.

Carbon footprint assessments: an awareness raising tool

A carbon footprint assessment is an inventory of physical processes relating to economic activity. It provides an overview of the business based on energy and climate variables rather than on an economic assessment. It helps detect strong and weak areas relating to the issue of energy and the company's greenhouse gas emissions impact. Furthermore, it also enables the categories that are least dependent on fossil fuels to be highlighted against a background of expensive energy, which is likely to become even dearer.

<http://www2.ademe.fr/servlet/KBaseShow?sort=-1&cid=96&m=3&catid=15730>

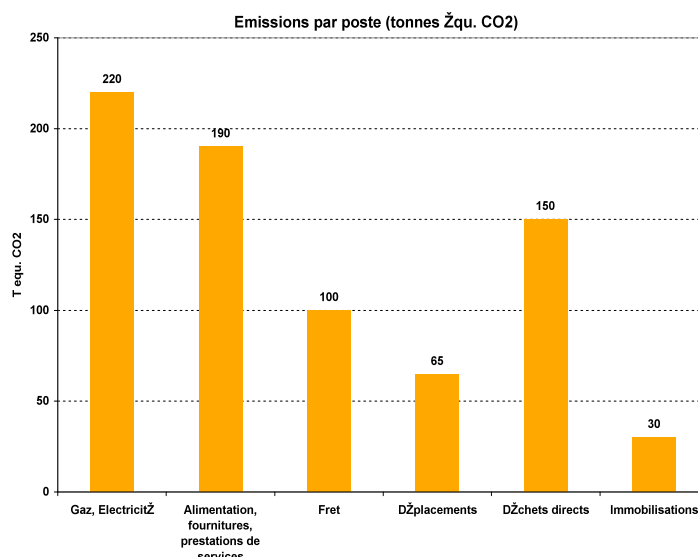
Some groups have tried to gain an overview of their community's greenhouse gas emissions through a carbon footprint assessment in order to take environmental awareness raising work further and make people aware of the links between their own energy consumption and the issue of global warming.

Emmaus Bougival (France) and Emmaus Pamplona (Spain) have carried out an in-depth analysis of their carbon emissions using this method. The assessments have highlighted the areas in which the communities need to make an effort to cut their greenhouse gas emissions and limit their environmental impact.

These initiatives seek to raise everyone's awareness by **highlighting groups' strong and weak points**. A carbon footprint assessment enables a better understanding to be gained of which areas need to be prioritised in order to cut greenhouse gas emissions. The analysis conducted by the Pamplona community showed that **transport was a major contributor to the group's emissions**. Transport also has a very significant impact at Bougival. However, if customer transport is deleted from the figures, by far the main source of the community's emissions **is energy consumed by its house**, which is run-down, poorly insulated and heated with fossil fuels.

Recycling – a carbon saving activity

The carbon footprint appraisal conducted at Bougival highlighted the **positive impact of the collection and recycling work** carried out by the Emmaus groups. All the goods given a new lease of life by Emmaus are products that have not been produced twice over.

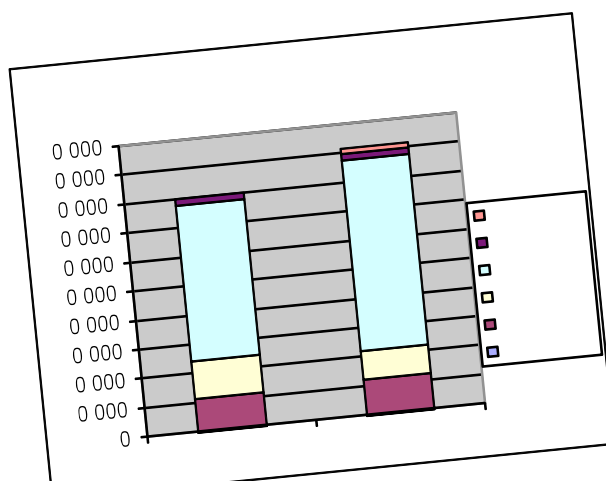


Graph showing Emmaus Bougival's carbon emissions (France). The figures do not take into account customer journeys in the transport category. The carbon footprint assessment was carried out by the consultants Carbone 4 in 2009.

These initiatives raise awareness about a situation at a given moment and also enable efforts to be analysed if the group studies its carbon emissions over time.

However, these sorts of initiatives are not enough on their own. **Basic awareness raising** is needed and should be accompanied by a discussion process on the subject and explanation of the issues (the link between energy consumption and global warming, how to reduce consumption, why such and such a method is worthwhile) within the group in order to **motivate people to take action** as a result of the assessment.

Carbon footprint assessments must be a **collective undertaking and must be part of a wider initiative to develop a group environmental project** in order to link them to the group's day-to-day life and so that everyone feels involved.



Emmaus: a socially responsible movement

International solidarity is one of the pillars of the Emmaus Movement. A range of initiatives are organised, including national and regional salons and big sales, to fund a large number of programmes and projects in less well-off groups.



Epinal sale, May 2010

Although these salons are undoubtedly ways of developing solidarity, their environmental impact nevertheless remains an issue. Could we not think up a way of holding salons or big sales that is more environmentally friendly right from the preliminary organisation phase? While these events enable us to raise funds for solidarity initiatives, they also have a significant financial and environmental impact, in terms of miles travelled and consumption of disposable materials (paper for flyers and advertising, plastic / metal for water bottles, drink cans, plastic cups), which are not necessarily sorted following use, and food.

Funding international solidarity

- **The annual sale:** It is the duty of all Emmaus International member groups to hold an annual solidarity sale during a given week in June (or at any time between June and the end of August) and to transfer all the takings to Emmaus International to fund the movement's international solidarity initiatives.
- **Salons:** One of the Movement's most emblematic salons is the Emmaus Paris Salon, which every year for more than a decade has brought together over 150 groups from all over Europe and a few representatives from the other Emmaus regions. All the takings are used for international solidarity projects run by Emmaus International in the organisation's four regions. The funds raised in 2009 helped fund Emmaus Brat Albert's community house in Krakow (Poland), occupational therapy initiatives run by the International Solidarity Forum (Bosnia) and the development of a waste recovery and sorting activity employing 40 women in Burkina Faso.

The aim is not to stop running events of this type, but instead to rethink them from a more environmentally friendly standpoint.

- Could we not rationalise the use of trucks in order to group together goods and people from each region rather than every group travelling to the event in its own truck?
- Could we not give up consuming and using disposable products at this type of event (water fountains and returnable cups, for example, as is already the case at many salons and festivals)?
- Could we not consider taking advantage of this type of event to raise awareness of Emmaus' role as an environmental stakeholder by holding practical demonstrations: activities raising people's awareness about the environment and Emmaus' role in reuse, organic, local and seasonal food in order to reduce the already significant amount of journeys made, dry toilets, waste sorting bins and a partnership with the various bodies that manage public transport in order to encourage citizens to use it to get to the event and to make the journey home?

What type of solidarity do we want to promote in Emmaus?

Do we only want to develop a direct form of solidarity by transferring funds, improving short-term conditions but at the same time contributing to creating the causes of tomorrow's extreme poverty by not taking into account our environmental impact?

Should we not take into account this type of negative externality as a matter of course in order to reduce the overall impact of our work and lifestyle?



Poster at Emmaus Krefeld, appealing for support so that the community could install solar panels.

Can we not think up different forms of indirect solidarity alongside these forms of direct solidarity?

We can protect the environment in our day-to-day lives and reject certain types of products manufactured by multinationals which pollute and exploit communities, we can choose local and seasonal produce and opt for renewable energies rather than energies that mortgage the future of humankind.

These various examples highlight a form of solidarity that involves every individual making daily choices. These practical steps that we can take seem to have no obvious link with international solidarity. However, they have a real impact on international political issues, as they foster alternative development methods and protect the populations of the countries that are now the biggest victims of our economic model.

Running environmental initiatives in your group does not prevent solidarity; far from it. Emmaus Krefeld's initiative in this area is quite significant.

The community decided to install solar panels on the roof of its house. The community made an appeal for donations and organised special sales and initiatives with its customers in order to raise the funds needed to finance the panels. The sales and initiatives financed the installation of the solar panels which now produce electricity which is sold back to the grid. The funds generated are allocated to international solidarity. Krefeld's initiative clearly demonstrates the concept of indirect solidarity.



"Are we not stealing the last remaining possession of the weakest members of society when we damage the planet?"

Abbé Pierre, La protection de la vie, 1970

EMMAUS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR US?

AN ANTHOLOGY OF OUR DISCUSSIONS ON THE ISSUE

"Emmaus should be like a candle in the darkness and shed a light of hope on the possibility of building a different kind of world, even if we ourselves cannot change everything that is wrong. In any case we want to make a contribution."

"The environment is primarily about money. Only those who have the resources can set up environmental initiatives because considerable initial investment is required. People say that you get a return on your investment through the energy you save, but it is expensive until you get to that point."

"Society is very cold but here at Emmaus people can really find a place for themselves. We don't work for a factory or a person but to help people."

"As Abbé Pierre said, we are here to get people off the streets and out of the poverty in which they live, but we are also here as a movement to try to make out the path to take to change reality a little."

"We need to start taking into account the fact that we cannot do everything and waste everything. Resources will not be available forever."

"How can we create a link between helping people, working for social ideals and respecting the environment?"

« "Emmaus needs to combine the environment in a narrow sense and in a wider sense, incorporating relationships between people. That is Emmaus' strength. Emmaus does not just work on the environment but also works to ensure that people are fulfilled and happy."

"Utopians are those people who say that we can carry on living like we do now."

"A different world is possible and we no longer want the current one. We are doing something political; our work has nothing to do with charity."

"The environment is one of the most important issues on which Emmaus works. The movement works on the balance between resources and waste, consumption and waste and also with people who have been abandoned by society. We use recycling to help people that society has rejected. There is a definite link between resources that are considered to be waste by society and people that society rejects in just the same way."



"The environment is a key issue for Emmaus because we make our living by recovering raw materials. Emmaus is also acknowledged to be a key player in this area. The companions are quite proud about being at the cutting edge for these issues."

"If our practices are beyond reproach we can carry out political lobbying drawing on our day-to-day experiences."

"If people are not being respected, it is difficult to respect the environment."

"When we talk of degrowth at Emmaus, we are confronted by a paradox because we make our living from society's overconsumption and waste. How can we resolve this contradiction?"

"Emmaus could have an environmental role to play. However, the ecological conversion of the movement is hampered by the development and omnipresence of economic issues which hold sway over everything else."

"We need to be aware of the time we are giving ourselves. Sometimes we need to settle down and stop rushing about, calm down and debate, and ask ourselves questions."

"Although degrowth is a bit of a slogan, behind it there is nevertheless a comprehensive political, social, cultural, economic and financial vision, which enables us to see Emmaus' work in a different light."

"We won't change things by planting organic vegetable gardens."

"We live in a society in which people always want more, endlessly consume and throw away more and more. Life no longer has any meaning and people no longer have any imagination. Where are such a society's values? Consumption doesn't make people happy. The more we share, the richer we become."

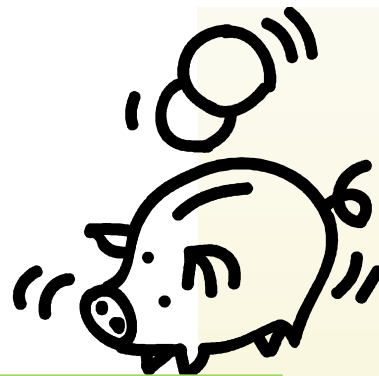
"If we ignore water, resources and organic farming, we would be contradicting the discourse championed by the Movement. Our work would be incomplete if we restricted ourselves to working on waste."

"As a movement, are we willing to take risks in order to change?"

"As we live together in the Emmaus communities we have a lower carbon footprint, as we use fewer resources by living together. Very strong values, such as sharing work and ideas, recycling, and solidarity with the whole world, exist in Emmaus. We share all of these values with degrowth."



IS PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT AN INVESTMENT?



Turning a desire to do something into concrete action

The issue of funding environmental initiatives in Emmaus groups is frequently highlighted as being a **stumbling block**. Being environmentally friendly seems to be an expensive business and often only appears in the form of investment or additional expenditure. However, most initiatives are not costly and even enable groups to subsequently make savings, which balance out initial investment.

Environmental investment actually epitomises the idea of voluntary simplicity

Furthermore, investing enables groups to become more independent and also makes our **discourse on ethics and our daily practices coherent**, which can constitute an important issue within Emmaus.

An example of a group's initiatives: the different stages in the process of alternative energy use

Installing renewable energy production units (solar photovoltaic panels and solar thermal panels) is often the most costly form of investment. **However, there are numerous ways of making this investment a feasible financial option.**

1. Firstly, fitting solar panels is usually part of an overall energy project.

It is worth thinking hard about how we can reduce our energy consumption and therefore the ensuing costs before fitting expensive panels. We can do this by making small day-to-day changes:

- Switching off lights, not leaving appliances in standby mode and using energy-saving light bulbs (Rzeszow - Poland, Dennemont and Poitiers - France).
- Paying attention to heating (Armentières - France).
- Focusing on building insulation (Pamplona - Spain and *métisse* insulation (material made out of used textiles) used by Ruffec - France).
- The building itself.
- Only opting for electric and electronic appliances that are really needed.

These various measures **help to significantly reduce energy bills** and therefore **help fund some of the cost.**



Emmaus Fiesso - Italy. The community's house is currently being restored.

2. Various grants, awarded by the state or regions throughout Europe, are part of **policies supporting the development of green energy** (see the chapter on energy issues).

3. Finally, electrical energy produced can be sold back to the grid (Emmaus Villafranca - Italy and Emmaus Krefeld - Germany) and can therefore become a **source of income**. It is often said that solar photovoltaic panels become profitable over a 15 year period.

4. An ethical loan can be used to finance investment: Emmaus Villafranca, for example, borrowed the amount it needed to fit solar photovoltaic panels on the roof of its secondhand store from **Banca Etica**. Emmaus Krefeld **made an appeal for donations** and organised special events to **fund solar panel installation**.

5. Another way of funding this type of project is to **set up groups of citizens** who want to make a socially-responsible investment in an ethical project. This method enables renewable energy production units or other units to be installed.



Investing in renovation or insulation work is done in more or less the same way in each area. Choosing appropriate and locally available products, discussing the design before the project is rolled out, using as many reclaimed materials as possible, self-building and using natural techniques all make for significant savings.

Many groups have found that installing a wood-burning boiler is also a great way of saving money:

- *The wood being burned is reclaimed wood (La Poudrière - Belgium).*

- *Wood is a less expensive and renewable resource, unlike gas or fuel oil (Emmaus Ferrara - Italy).*

- *The technologies harnessed enable heat to be more effectively distributed and released (Angers - France).*

The issue of cost is not therefore a major obstacle to taking environmentally-friendly measures and can be got round using numerous existing resources and tricks and above all by firstly taking the time to reflect on the initiative and its meaning.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Sustainable development / degrowth

- Worldwatch Institute State of the World 2010, Transforming Culture from Consumerism to Sustainability (in English)
- Victor Peter A. Managing Without Growth. Slower by Design, Not Disaster, Edward Elgar, 2008 (in English)
- Jackson Tim, Prosperity without Growth. Economics for a Finite Planet, Earthscan, 2009(in English)
- Marko Ulvila & Jarna Pasanen (editors): Sustainable Futures (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2009) <http://www.sustainablefutures.fi> (English)
- Illich Ivan, La Convivialité, Seuil, 1973 (original title: Tools for conviviality)
- Gorz André, Écologie et politique, Galilée, 1975
- Diamond Jared, Effondrement. Comment les sociétés décident de leur disparition ou de leur survie, Gallimard, NRF Essais, 2006 (original title: Collapse, 2005)
- Latouche Serge, Entre Mondialisation et décroissance. L'autre Afrique. A plus d'un titre édition. 2008
- Latouche Serge, Survivre au Développement – De la décolonisation de l'imaginaire économique à la construction d'une société alternative. Mille et une Nuits, 2004
- Latouche Serge, Le pari de la décroissance, Paris, Fayard, 2006
- Kempf Hervé, Comment les riches détruisent la planète, Seuil, 2007
- Kemps Hervé, Pour sauver la planète, sortez du capitalisme, Seuil, 2009
- <http://www.retelilliput.org/> (Italian)
- www.sbilanciamoci.org (Italian)

- <http://decrecimiento-navarra.blogspot.com/2009/05/presentacion-publica-de-dale-vuelta-el.html> (Spanish)

Waste:

- Compost: <http://www.eco-bio.info/compost.html>
- European directive(2008/98/EC)on waste
<http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:312:0003:0030:FR:PDF>
- <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/legislation/index.htm>
- <http://www.net-iris.fr/veille-juridique/actualite/21021/transposition-de-la-nouvelle-directive-dechets-avant-la-fin-2010.php>

Water

- Dry toilets:
- <http://www.eco-bio.info/ouaterre.html>
- <http://www.habitat-ecologique.org/enquete.php>
- http://www.lowimpact.org/factsheet_compost_toilets.htm
- <http://www.toiletteacompost.org/Exposition-Christophe-Elain,31>
- Energy: <http://www2.ademe.fr/servlet/getDoc?id=11433&m=3&cid=96>
- Nuclear power and alternatives to nuclear power:
<http://www.negawatt.org/V4%20scenario%20nW/scenario.htm>
- Carbon footprints: <http://www.agir21.org/flash/empreintecoweb/loadcheckplugin.html>
- Carbon footprint assessment:<http://www.calculateurcarbone.org/>
- Renewable energy: <http://www.cler.org/info/>

Food

- Films on the detrimental effects of intensive farming / existing alternatives.
<http://www.solutionslocales-lefilm.com/>
<http://www.foodincmovie.com/about-the-film.php>

Solidarity

- North / south inequality film : <http://www.lafindelapauvrete.com/>

And What's your role ?

BRUSSELS:

WHAT NEXT?

**FOLLOW-UP TO THE REGIONAL
ASSEMBLY OF EMMAUS EUROPE**

Why not use this resource to spark a discussion in your group?

- So, where are you up to?
What are your environmentally-friendly practices?

Feel free to discuss the issue with us!

.....

.....

.....

.....



47, avenue de la Résistance
F-93104 Montreuil, Cedex

Tel : + 33 (0)1 41 58 25 70
Fax : + 33 (0)1 48 18 79 88

contact@emmaus-europe.org
www.emmaus-europe.org