

European Bosnia-Herzegovina Collective

2 April 2017

Doboj Istok, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Participants

- Hans Van Beek, Bosnia Collective representative and member of the EE Regional Executive.
- Hamzalija Okanovic and Sabina Arnaut Jahic from the Emmaus-International Solidarity Forum (ISF), Bosnia-Herzegovina.
- Jadranko Janković, Saša Risojević, Tatjana Risojević from Nova Generacija, Bosnia-Herzegovina.
- Patrick Vappereau, Emmaus les Ulis, France.
- Eddy Thoreau and Clhéo Gore, Val de Brie insertion, France.
- Titeuf Vindeirinho, Emmaus Bourges, France.
- Jeroen Geurts, Emmaus Langeweg, Netherlands.
- Charly Viguier, Hugo Valentin and Thibault Viguier, Emmaus Satu Mare, Romania.
- Camille Decaens, the Emmaus Europe Secretariat.

Roundtable session and introductory remarks

Emmaus-ISF celebrated its 18th anniversary on the eve of the meeting. The collective participants joined forces with the group's partners to celebrate the anniversary. They were given information about the group's activities and they visited its sites around Doboj Istok.

It is worth reiterating that non-profits are not allowed to run income-generating activities in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This means that non-profits can create businesses that they own in order to deliver services or run a commercial activity.

- Nova Generacija founded *NG Firma* in March 2015.
- Emmaus-ISF created *MFS Trade* for the dairy and sales in the shop in the area around Doboj Istok and *MFS Hana* for the farm produce in the area around Srebrenica.

The managers of *MFS Trade* and *MFS Hana* are paid employees and regularly report back to the Emmaus-ISF board, whose president is a volunteer.

The association's director monitors work on the various sites and activities in order to have an overview. It is important that the income-generating activities make enough of a profit to fund the solidarity projects. Coordination and transparency between the association and its company are vital.

Nova Generacija¹

Broad outline of the 2016 review of day-to-day activities

- **The children's centre** aims to be a safe place for street children and victims of domestic abuse. The rehabilitation is delivered at the children's pace.
 - 107 children have stayed at the centre.
 - 4,316 meals distributed.
 - 293 workshops (prevention and crafts).

¹ Boris Bajić, president of NG, whose car broke down on the eve of the meeting and was unable to attend, and Boris Makarić, a member of the board, who is currently spending two months in France and is taking the opportunity to get involved in the work of Emmaus Longjumeau, were both excused.

The involvement of a large number of volunteers in the rollout of new activities was mentioned. The volunteers are mainly psychology and social work students from Banja Luka University. In particular, during the festive season the group organized a contemporary dance group and handed out presents to children and families in the local area following a collection in a local supermarket.

- **The shelter for street children and children involved in begging.**
Open 24 hours a day. Children are given first aid on arrival.
- **The big brothers and sisters project** is a mentoring and learning initiative involving nine children and nine voluntary mentors who undertake activities together.
- **The telephone helpline** Children can call 0800 50305 in the event of domestic abuse. The number of calls increased in the first months of 2017 following a campaign to promote the number in several towns in the country.
 - 1,429 calls were received in 2016.
 - 61 cases of abuse were reported to the police.
 - 3,084 hours of voluntary work clocked up.
- **Day-to-day grassroots work** continues. 440 boxes of provisions were donated to local communities.

2017 target – open a shop

Reminder of the context and the internal conflict: as a result, there is a new team in charge of NG. The situation has been sorted out and the group can now concentrate on the future.

The former president and then former director of the social co-op is running private activities in Banja Luka but he no longer works with the group and his activities are not linked in any way to NG. Emmaus Europe is supporting the work of NG, which is a trial member of the Emmaus Movement with a view to becoming a full member.

Development of NG Firma's action plan

The questions raised at the last collective meeting helped progress the development of this action plan. While the plan still needs fine-tuning, the group is now ready to set up an income-generating activity by opening a shop. The next phases are organizing the storage and acquisition of goods, renting a shop and organizing how to sell goods, and then developing marketing.

The first step will be to receive a lorry load of clothing and small items from a European Emmaus group.

- NG has a 50m² warehouse where some of the goods could be stored but also intends to rent an additional 80m² warehouse.
- The group is planning to rent out the containers owned by NG but located outside the town to a local building company². The building company intends to use the containers as accommodation for workers. This would generate funds for NG. The initial rental period would be for six months. Monthly rental will be set at 600 BAM (roughly €300).
- A shop will be rented as soon as the lorry load is received. Potential locations have been identified and would cost 200-600 BAM (approximately €100 - €300). Furthermore, Bosnian law stipulates that the shop manager must be a paid employee and not a volunteer. Volunteers will unload goods, prepare the shop and work in the warehouse.

² See reports of the previous European Bosnia-Herzegovina Collective meetings.

- The group is currently promoting the Emmaus values and drafting a charter for volunteers. The intention is also to continue discussions and conveying the Emmaus Movement's history and values and training for grassroots work.

Emmaus-ISF is willing to help NG with setting up this income-generating activity and with developing projects. However, it would be premature to think about setting up a residential community at NG; this would be more appropriate in three to five years' time. Emmaus-ISF has suggested that NG sells the containers and uses the funds raised to rent a shop in the centre. Using the income from the sale and from the first lorry load of goods, NG could:

- Start a home help service. This suggestion has been made because there is always the possibility of the elderly people leaving the group their properties in return for care received. This type of property could be used to house a community in the future. NG's future is in the town and not 20km away.
- First and foremost, the group needs to continue with the traditional activities for which it is known.
- If the group receives its first lorry load in the next couple of months, the next collective meeting will be able to discuss first sales results. The group needs to get going and Emmaus-ISF is willing to help. For instance, €5,000 would be needed to buy a new car to use for the new projects and the wages for the employees selling the goods. It would then be down to NG to demonstrate that it is able to implement the activities.

The example of how Emmaus-ISF receives lorry loads. In December 2016, Emmaus-ISF and specifically *MFS Trade* purchased a load from the *Proplan* Foundation in the Netherlands. The goods must be valued at a low cost on the invoice because VAT needs to be paid based on this amount. Some of the VAT must be paid immediately and then sales income will enable the balance to be settled and a fund to be established. The load was cleared through customs and then inspected. Everything went smoothly.

The procedure for sending a lorry load of goods to Bosnia will be sent to anyone interested. A comprehensive list of the goods in the truck needs to be drawn up. NG wants to focus on clothing and small items in the first instance. A report will then be drafted on how the income generated is used. NG is asking for the sending group to cover transport costs for this first load.

- The Emmaus Europe Secretariat will get in touch in the near future with the groups who had volunteered to send a load last year to find out if they are still willing and able. They included Emmaus Longjumeau and Emmaus les Ulis in France, Emmaus Åland in Finland, Emmaus Cologne in Germany and Emmaus Bougival in France.

The rationale for opening a shop: set up an income-generating activity to fund housing and support for families. A long-term 10-15 year plan was mentioned to build accommodation and support premises. The idea is to present the targets set by the group but it is too soon to provide details. The aim is to create accommodation (three houses for six families, for instance) with the necessary infrastructure: access to water, electricity and sanitation. The next step will be to prepare the land in order to plant a vegetable garden and orchard and erect greenhouses. The main source of funding will be shop sales.

FAQ

- If a European group did send a load in the next two months, **is the group ready to open the shop within the same timescale?** Yes, the 80m² storage premises have been found. Three or four potential shops have been identified and by renting out the containers, the group would have sufficient funds to pay the rent for the shop and storage premises.
- **How many loads would the group like to receive each year?** The group would like to receive a first load to relaunch sales. Depending on the results, a second and/or third load could be considered.
- **Who is going to work in the shop?** The NG paid employees and volunteers. Depending on sales results, the parents of the children attending the centre could be employed in order to give them long-term help. The law stipulates that volunteers can help but the manager must be a paid employee.
- **Is community-based training or are visits for the members of the group and volunteers needed at the present time?** The volunteers are interested but things need to be taken slowly as the group needs to be able to cover travel costs.

Emmaus-ISF

Reminder of how Emmaus-ISF was created

- In 1992, some Italians went to help the country during the war.
- In 1993, the first activity was a soup kitchen run with the Red Crescent. In Gračanica, 3,000 meals were prepared every day for anyone who needed them. The idea was then to extend the partnership with the canton of Tuzla and meet the other organisations sending food.
- In 1994, they met with Emmaus and specifically Franco Bettoli. Emmaus Villafranca also sent food, nappies and other essentials.
- In 1995, Emmaus Villafranca brought potato seedlings. They also donated computers to be used when working on projects. When asked about their needs, Hamzalja said they needed a tractor to work the land and grow food. This is how Emmaus-ISF started. The tractor is still at Duje and remains a symbol. The other Emmaus partners travelled to the country to gradually build the Duje centre.

The group is planning to write a book about its history to coincide with its 20th anniversary in two years' time. The Italian Emmaus groups will be approached to find out about the history. The Emmaus groups were the greatest sources of support and were behind the creation of Emmaus-ISF in Bosnia. A large number of public figures, such as Doctor Mujčinagić Muamer, helped progress to be made and made a significant personal contribution. It is important to remember them and their achievements. The process of setting up the group has not been plain sailing all the way. A lot of help arrived in Bosnia at the same time. There was opposition but a long-term vision is needed. The group now helps others. Indeed, this is Emmaus' core aim: become self-sufficient enough to be able to help others.

Activities

The Collective was able to witness some of the group's work around Doboj Istok, notably the Duje centre,³ the children's centre, the dairy co-op and the shop.

³ Information available on <http://www.actemmaus.org/fr/project/show/66>

- **The 2017 youth camp** will take place as it does every year from 10-26 July around Srebrenica and will kick off with the commemoration. Activities have not yet been decided but it will first and foremost be a case of taking part in renovating and building housing for families returning to Bosnia, helping the local population, handing out meals, helping with farm work and making jam.
- **Syria initiative** 500 tonnes of flour, oil and nappies are being sent to Syria. The last convoy made up of 16 lorries left last week. The Emmaus-ISF director was set to leave just after the Collective to await the convoy on the Turkish border.
- **The refugee support project at Belgrade station** From Sunday to Thursday Emmaus-ISF volunteers are at the station distributing breakfast to 1,200 to 1,800 destitute migrants who are staying in this completely unsuitable location. They do not want to go to the migrant shelters in Serbia because they do not want to remain in the country. However, it will be difficult for them to extricate themselves and the Serbian government has banned any local associations from helping them. Furthermore, thanks to the help of a number of associations, including Emmaus Villafranca in Italy, Emmaus-ISF is purchasing food and essentials on the spot and then distributing them. Members of Emmaus Satu Mare in Romania are offering to lend a hand on the ground.

Emmaus-ISF / Emmaus Netherlands exchange An exchange has been set up between Emmaus-ISF and several Dutch groups. Members of Emmaus-ISF are hosted by the Dutch groups for community stays. A container has also been loaded. The profit made from selling the goods will be allocated to a new project: preparing meals for needy people. The food will be made in the *Leptir* group's restaurant or at the Duje centre. It was also suggested that members of NG could travel to the Netherlands to share the Emmaus experience, see how goods are sorted, how Emmaus works in that country, how to load a container etc.

European transport programme Emmaus-ISF would like to receive four loads this year but only after NG has received the first load.

Idea of opening up the Collective to associations in the region

- Toms in Croatia runs activities for people with physical disabilities.⁴ The organisation would like to join as a trial member and Emmaus-ISF thinks that it is ready to take this step. Furthermore, another even better known organisation in Croatia is interested in joining the Emmaus Movement. Emmaus-ISF cooperates with this organisation. Information will be sent to Emmaus Europe. Emmaus-ISF is already cooperating with different organisations in Croatia with a view to a large number of migrants arriving in Croatia or in the region in the near future and as part of a plan to open a centre in the border area funded by the International Organisation for Migration.
- Exchanges might also be possible with Romania. Eight or nine members of Emmaus-ISF could meet the Romanian groups and/or take part in the European Romania Collective.
- Emmaus Vlora in Albania (a trial member) could be contacted to support the invitation sent to all the Emmaus groups to take part in the Bosnia Collective.

⁴ This association was invited to attend the 27 November 2014 Bosnia-Herzegovina Collective in Montreuil. The meeting minutes describe the activities being rolled out.

The peace march

This is a Swiss initiative and involves an 80km march over three days bringing together 5,000 to 8,000 people following in the footsteps of the Bosnians who crossed the mountains to the free zone near Tuzla to flee the genocide. In cooperation with Emmaus-ISF, the founders of the *Solidarité Renaissance* association, the *Val de Brie insertion* group and other participants will gradually lay out the path during the march, which will head in the opposite direction to those who fled the genocide (pruning, building bridges etc). A large number of young Bosnians are taking part in the peace march during which there will be worthwhile encounters against the backdrop of the stunning landscape and meditative moments when they reach the mass graves. The peace march will be a remembrance march but the core aim is to look to the future. The march will take place on 8-10 July and will end on 11 July with the genocide commemoration at the Potocari memorial and the inauguration of the youth camp.

- Please contact Eddy Thoreau if you wish to register for the march: thoreaueddy@orange.fr.

The European solidarity programme

Following a reminder about how the programme works and the schedule, the floor was given to the members of **Frères Europa in Romania to explain the micro-credit fund initiative offering access to housing** for young people who are Emmaus Satu Mare inclusion scheme leavers. The micro-credit fund initiative is supported by the European solidarity programme.

It was reiterated that the European programme supports projects rubberstamped by the region. The projects are rolled out using voluntary donations made by the Emmaus groups in Europe. The programme was launched on 9 March and is starting to receive contributions. However, the challenge involves rolling out most of the initiatives in the summer months, notably those requiring building work (Emmaus Padova in Italy, the MPFSC in Lithuania, Emmaus Iasi and Frères Europa in Romania).

The groups' solidarity initiatives can also be promoted via the **Act Emmaus platform**. Emmaus-ISF has included information about the aforementioned Duje centre's activities.

Information needed and additional discussions

Two issues were raised:

- What are the Bosnian stakeholders' and the participants' needs in terms of knowledge of the Emmaus Movement / conveying values?
- What additional information/points need to be clarified for the participants in terms of knowledge of Bosnia or the activities run by the groups in the country?

On the eve of the Collective, Hans Van Beek and Eddy Thoreau provided an overview of the history of Emmaus, Abbé Pierre's life story, the principles underpinning the creation of the Emmaus Movement and the values championed by the groups, to the members of NG and Emmaus-ISF. Around 10 volunteers and employees and the Collective participants attended the training session. The initiative should be repeated as it is important for the new generations to learn about Emmaus' early days and the meaning behind the activities undertaken.

Regarding Bosnia-Herzegovina, the director of Emmaus-ISF talked about the complex nature of the political situation and the administration, in order to reaffirm his desire to focus on grassroots work and Emmaus' day-to-day work.

Emmaus International and Emmaus Europe news was mentioned to round off the meeting. The motions approved at the Jesolo World Assembly and the Manchester Regional Assembly were reiterated at this point. The Europe region's priority work areas (circular economy and migration) were mentioned.

Schedule and closing roundtable

- Meeting on 16 June of the French members of the BBF (partnership between certain groups from Bosnia, Burkina Faso and France). Following a discussion with the organizer, the Bosnia Collective representative could attend the meeting to meet the partners and discuss the working group.
- The next collective meeting will be held on **30 November 2017**. The meeting will be held in Montreuil as no groups volunteered to host it.

Thank you to Emmaus-ISF for hosting the meeting and to the participants for contributing to it and for joining in the 18th anniversary celebrations.