

Regional cohesion and working together

The big Epinal sale to support European solidarity ...

23 Emmaus groups from seven European countries: Poland, Germany, France, Belgium, Italy, the UK and the Netherlands, and local associations participated in the event on 1-2 May to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Rambervilliers Committee of Friends, in France.

The efforts of the European groups helped generate the sum of €30,000 for Emmaus Rzeszow in Poland to help with the construction of its community house. The house will provide a home for up to 30 companions and will offer an alternative to existing options for needy people, while promoting mutual support in the community and in the surrounding area.

Once again, 2010 brought together Emmaus groups, and particularly European groups, at the 11th Emmaus Salon held at Porte de Versailles. **Italy, UK, Germany, Romania, Poland, Ukraine, Sweden, Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland and Finland** were the European countries, along with France, to have been represented on 20 June 2010.

Come hell or High water

The astounding situation left by 2010 is truly catastrophic in terms of the damage done to the citizens of the world, because the transformation of the private sector finance crisis into a public finance crisis, and its subsequent metamorphosis into a currency crisis and political crisis, developed at a fast pace in 2010.

The end result is that the countries of the world must cope with massive public deficits. These phenomena have had a recessionary impact, which in turn has increased the number of rejects around the world. In this sense, the tightening of adjustment plans, as seen in Romania, for example, illustrates how the sacrifices that society must make to attempt to calm the world of finance have suddenly and outrageously escalated.

The social gains of recent years have been eroded by economic and financial policies in indict globalization.

Only one **alternative remains open to the 15,000 plus Emmaus members working in Europe: continue to serve** the region's Emmaus groups and the most disadvantaged members of society, convey our viewpoint and make ourselves heard, so that fundamental rights are actually exercised.

Julio de la Granja

What's left from Brussels 2009 ?

The Regional Assembly of 2009 defined 3 major work areas for 2009-2011 :

Political decision-maker and civil society lobbying

Empowerment

Sustainable development durable/degrowth



How to be influential within Europe ?

2010 was declared the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion by the European Union. However, Emmaus Europe has not contented itself with just one year...

This is why Emmaus Europe seized an additional opportunity to make our voice heard and be recognised by local, national and European politicians.

In order to tackle the campaign head on, **a European Year for Combating Poverty poster was produced and we sought to further develop our lobbying drawing on our varied experiences.**

Sustainable development/degrowth

Following the Regional Assembly of Emmaus Europe in October 2009 in Brussels, a decision was taken to **survey, promote and compile** in a report the **environmental practices** of the European Emmaus groups. The completion of the **'Emmaus and the environment - review and prospects in the European groups' handbook** was circulated internally in CD format.

The handbook sought to challenge us about the link between the values we champion and the issues connected to the social and environmental crises.

This first ever review of Emmaus groups' best practice has led us to start the second phase of this initiative, which involves promoting Emmaus' practices in Europe, and evaluating the impact of the initiatives run by the groups and the alternative model that Emmaus offers society. We believe that this is not an empty assertion and will continue to work for a fairer and more sustainable society.

We will continue to create alternatives by drawing inspiration from each other and by sharing our practices.

A poster **"The Emmaus groups: champions of alternatives?"** was circulated by Emmaus Europe.

The poster illustrates parts of the 2009 Regional Assembly of Emmaus Europe summary about degrowth and sustainable development. It highlights the links between environmentally-friendly practices and the values of solidarity and addressing the root causes of extreme poverty.

Political decision-maker and civil society lobbying

At European Union level, movements of people will be regulated when the European Parliament adopt the 'asylum package' between now and 2012. This set of measures aims to improve harmonisation of reception policies for people requesting international protection in the EU countries.

In 2010 Emmaus Europe made the right of asylum its core theme when defending migrants' rights. We therefore decided to focus our work and that of the European Emmaus groups on the reform of the asylum package. Emmaus Europe contacted various MEPs in order to put forward its recommendations on the proposal for a recast of the Directive on the procedures for granting the status of refugee.

There is still a long way to go and we are seeking to mobilise the groups in the long-term, on a large scale and at local and European level, while familiarising ourselves with European current affairs. **Voting on the last few asylum package proposals will come to an end by 2012.**

We are just at the start of a process of local Emmaus groups raising the awareness of MEPs about these issues. Perseverance is therefore key.

Brussels and beyond: empowerment in Emmaus Europe

The Regional Assembly of Emmaus Europe held in Brussels in 2009 called for more in-depth dialogue with the companions. One of its objectives was to better integrate companions, starting at local level and going up to the Emmaus Europe decision-making process level, and in a wider sense to integrate them into the life of the Movement. The members of the regional assembly called this objective **empowerment**.

Where does the word come from? What does the concept mean? What meaning do we give to it?

It is vital **in the first instance to gain an overview of the concept of empowerment in order to be able to get to grips with it**. This concept is taken to **different levels in our European groups** via training, dialogue and action.

A handbook has been put together, on the initiative of certain European elected representatives, to enable you to find out more. They are offering you the chance to enhance your knowledge about this 'strange' term, using the guide.

The question is whether companion participation should be limited to the various gatherings organised by the movement. These gatherings undoubtedly give them an opportunity to reflect and express their opinions. However, it seems that the concept of empowerment entails more than this simple form of participation. Empowerment is all about everyone becoming involved in collective projects. Enabling everyone to become involved in the collective projects and decide on their interpretation of empowerment would make for greater participation and a greater feeling of belonging to the movement on the part of all of its members. The aim is to enrich the life of the group.

Let's continue this discussion process, which is not specific to the Europe region, and let's talk about it at regional council meetings and at all types of gatherings. People's involvement and knowledge of the Movement and its values vary greatly and are very rich!

The handbook marks the first phase of a wider initiative that we will run together in Emmaus Europe over the coming years. We hope that you enjoy reading the handbook and we look forward to discussing these issues with you.

The chance to meet and interact :

- **July : Work camp at Emmaus Feniks, Netherlands**
- **September : companions' meeting in Cologne, Germany**

These WCTNG-organised events were special moments enabling participants to meet up, discuss and progress. They enable participants to get away from their daily lives and then to return to them enriched, both professionally and personally, by this novel and unique experience.

In 2010, many youth camps were organized in Europe. Volunteers were hosted in Krefeld in Germany, La Poudrière in Belgium, Murcia in Spain, Aaland in Finland, Srebrenica in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also in French and Italian communities.



The European collectives: the result of the region's member groups working together



2010 was unique with regard to collective meetings as they were mostly held in European cities. It is clear to see that links between the partner groups have been further strengthened because many of them sent representatives to meetings in Doboj in Bosnia, Iasi in Romania, Rzeszow in Poland, Coventry in UK and Lille in France.



Solidarity initiatives

In 2010, the donations made by European groups meant that the following initiatives could be supported:

- Organisation of a youth camp and goods convoy to Srebrenica, in Bosnia.
- A human trafficking prevention and victim support initiative in Doboj Istok, in Bosnia.
- Structural aid to safeguard the Ukrainian group

Oselya's work by paying the wages of five staff.

- Support in Lithuania for the 'Girl Power' initiative which aims to guard against risks such as the trafficking, abuse and social exclusion of young girls and to promote gender equality.

Regional transport programme

- **50 is the number of loads that crossed Europe**

For the first time, lorry loads sent to Ukraine reached the destination group without being held up at customs. This constitutes a **big step forward and positive precedent for the next programme period.**



Key assertions from Coventry

In february, the Migration and Human Trafficking Collective met at the community of Emmaus Coventry. Apart from national differences, two major difficulties were highlighted : the few human rights guarantees and little assistance given to undocumented migrants and the criminalisation of those who assist and

take in undocumented migrants in some countries. The key assertions to be made with regard to European migration Policy are : **respecting the fundamental principles of the Emmaus movement when taking in migrants; shelter and support for « failed » asylum seekers; décriminalisation of support for undocumented migrants; international, European and national législation respecting fundamental rights; fighting racism and xenophobia.**

Definitely an issue requiring close monitoring !



Focusing on defending Emmaus values in the region

The life of the région was governed by the rythm of various gatherings

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

- We celebrated the **Iasi group's 10th anniversary**, the only member group in Romania. It was definitely a time for friendship, as 'Un coup de main d'Emmaüs Iasi' experienced Financial difficulties as part of the bigger picture of a major Financial crisis in the country.
- We also celebrated **Emmaus Villafranca's 25th anniversary**, in Italia, with all the Italian Emmaus communities.

TRAVEL DIARIES

- 4 UK groups **applied to become trial members and were visited by European elected representatives in summer 2010**: Emmaus Colchester, Emmaus Hastings & Rother, Emmaus Oxford and Emmaus Hampshire.
- **The Missing Persons' Families Support Centre (MPFSC)** group in Vilnius, Lithuania has been visited in order to take stock of the impact of the 'Girl Power' initiative, supported by the european solidarity.
- Many groups have been visited in order to conduct an in-depth Survey on the environmental practices of the groups. Thank you very much for welcoming us and for your contribution! To La Poudrière in Belgium ; Cologne and Krefeld in Germany, Traperos of Emmaüs in Pamplona and Social Foundation of San Sebastian in Spain ; Ferrara, Fiesso and Villafranca in Italy; Haarzivilens in Netherlands ; Angers in France...

And thank you to all of these who contributed by phone... and those that we met in the corridors...

Once again Emmaus Europe ran workshops during the session dedicated to the region at :

- Emmaus France General Assembly
- Emmaus Niort General Assembly – France
- General Assembly of the Friends of Emmaus Ruffec – France
- Annual meeting of friends from Brittany in Rédené – France
- Annual meeting of friends from Pays de la Loire/Poitou Charentes in Cholet - France.
- National Day for Emmaus community leaders in France in Tourcoing – France

STATUTORY LIFE

A **Regional Council of Emmaus Europe (RCEE)** was held in March 2010 in Montreuil. The **second RCEE of the year meeting took place on 15th 17 October 2010 in Rzeszow, Poland**. This meeting started with discussions about the presence of Emmaus Europe in Poland and was followed by a presentation of the Polish Emmaus groups, their activities and future prospects.

Note also :

- The Emmaus International Board meeting was held in Brussels in Belgium. The Belgian groups were in attendance and a **meeting between the German, Dutch and Belgian groups** and all the elected representatives was also held in April.
- The **Regional Executive of Emmaus Europe** met four times in 2010, with one of the meetings being spread over two consecutive days (Montreuil, Paris Region).
- The members of the Regional Executive of Emmaus Europe were invited to a half-day meeting on 3 July with the Emmaus International Executive Committee.

WHAT'S NEW IN EUROPE ?

- **Ukraine : Oselya** became a full member of the Emmaus Movement in April 2010, making it the only group in **Ukraine**.
- **France : Ateliers du Bocages**, France, also became a full member of the movement.
- **United Kingdom:** Emmaus Sheffield, Emmaus South Lambeth and Emmaus Glasgow also became full members.
- **Italy :** Catanzaro and Treviso started the trial membership application procès in 2010.

Conclusion on the past year

The most important facets of the past year were initiatives seeking to open up Emmaus Europe, both to member groups and to the world outside the Movement, with this being achieved through a major communications push. The region used 'self-produced' communications resources to promote the values of diversity and abundance that it champions. The letters and posters played a part in the groups publicising Emmaus Europe locally and nationally and this went hand-in-hand with Emmaus Europe being invited to take part in various sessions in the region.

The examination of the asylum package will come to an end in the next few years. However, we need to work unfailingly at all levels. Other issues will be on the agenda, many of which will have a direct impact on our groups and the lives of companions, volunteers, staff and leaders. We will continue to be stakeholders so that we can take a stance on these issues.

We are just at the start of a process of local Emmaus groups raising the awareness of civil society about these issues. Perseverance is therefore key.

Besides, after the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion in 2010, all the European Union countries celebrate, in 2011, the European Year for Volunteering. Which commitments will be undertaken by the European institutions. What kind of public-spirited actions will be launched? How to mobilize States on concrete action?

Let's keep an eye on it...

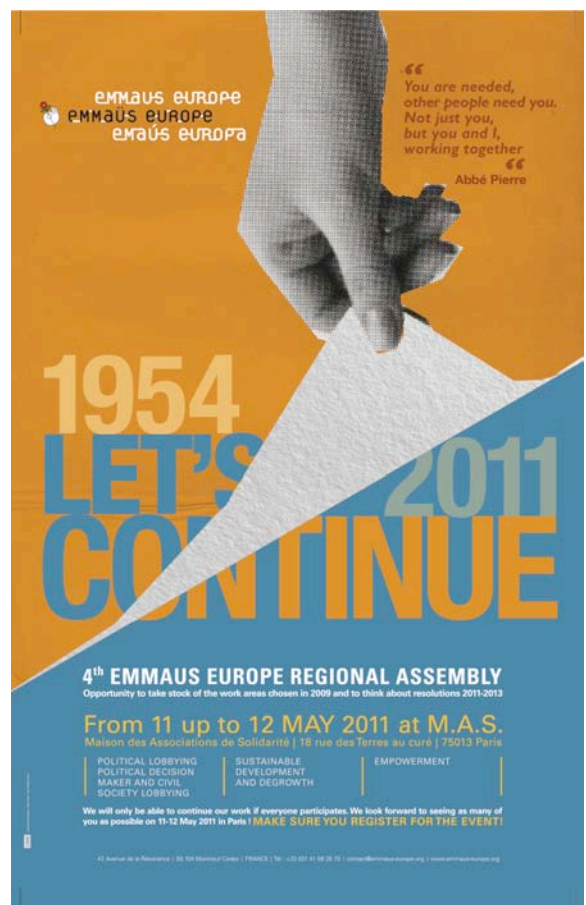
To be continued in 2011...

4th Regional Assembly of Emmaus Europe:

The 4th Regional Assembly of Emmaus Europe will be held in Paris on 11-12 May 2011 and its work will be keeping with the initiatives undertaken since the regional Assembly of Brussels, in 2009.

It will have a twin-pronged objective:

- Following 7 workshops on 4 themes, a declaration will be made and proposed initiatives will be put forward. The déclaration will compile the work carried out by Emmaus Europe over the past few years.
- The Europe Region's contribution to the procès of reflection set in motion by Emmaus International for the 2011 World Assembly: 'Emmaus, a crédible alternative in a difficult world?'



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