



MINUTES OF THE REGIONAL COUNCIL OF EMMAUS EUROPE (RCEE)

12 NOVEMBER 2020

VIDEO CONFERENCE

Minutes of the Regional Council of Emmaus Europe (RCEE)
12 November 2020 - Videoconference

PRESENT	MEMBERS OF THE REGIONAL COUNCIL		
	Carina Aaltonen, President of Emmaus Europe, Finland Jean-Philippe Légaut, Emmaus Europe treasurer, co-opted, Romania		
	NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES		NUMBER OF VOTERS
	Serena Lemmens, Germany Julio De La Granja, Belgium José Maria Garcia Bresó, Spain Anu Lahde, Finland Annick Berthier, France Virginia Tallone & Marie Balseca (transition), Italy	Jos Van der Meer, the Netherlands Grzegorz Hajduk, Poland Gélu Nichitel, Romania Charlotte Wester, Sweden Jérémy Udry, Switzerland Grigory Semenchuk, Ukraine	12 voters
	COUNCILLORS OF EMMAUS INTERNATIONAL (CEIs) – EUROPE REGION		NUMBER OF VOTERS
	Mikel Azkona, Spain Christian Calmejane, France Paul Darouèche, Romania Rosa Gil Elorduy, Spain Simon Grainge, UK	Martha Hannus, Finland Aurore Querel, Emmaus Europe Secretary, France Eduardo Sanchez, Spain Maria Luisa Testori, Italy Leila Thouret, Romania	10 voters
	EX OFFICIO MEMBER		
	Patrick Atohoun, chair of Emmaus International		
	GUEST PARTICIPANTS WITHOUT VOTING RIGHTS	SECRETARIAT OF EMMAUS EUROPE	
	Nathalie Pere Marzano, EI chief executive Hélène Perrot, Emmaus International Secretariat	Véronica Acevedo-Caro, admin-finance assistant Marie Tixier, events coordinator Théo Robin, solidarity coordinator Eve Poulteau, EE chief executive	

APOLOGIES RECEIVED

Sabina Arnaut Jahic, Bosnia-Herzegovina national delegate
Sue Taylor, UK national delegate
Amanda Steckly, UK CEI

Preamble

Carina Aaltonen welcomed all the members of the Regional Council and the representatives of Emmaus International (EI), Patrick Atohoun, the chair, and Nathalie Pere Marzano, the chief executive.

Carina accepted the apologies received from Sabina Arnaut Jahic, the Bosnia-Herzegovina national delegate, and Sue Taylor, the UK national delegate, who were unable to attend because of work commitments, and from Amanda Steckly, the UK CEI.

Introduction by Carina:

This is our first regional council meeting since we were elected in October 2019 in San Sebastian. The global pandemic has turned our daily lives upside down, as well as disrupting the holding of face-to-face meetings, and even the Emmaus World Assembly, which should have been held in October 2020 in Uruguay, but has been postponed to an unspecified date.

Despite the difficult circumstances, Emmaus Europe has nevertheless managed to hold meetings by videoconference:

- Five regional executives.
- A tour of Europe to get in touch with each member country and the collectives in the autumn.

We have also cooperated with Emmaus International to coordinate emergency solidarity during this crisis period.

Despite this unprecedented year, Emmaus Europe has also worked closely with anti-poverty and reuse networks at the European level.

I also wish to thank the EE secretariat team for their dedication during the pandemic.

Today is also an important date because our new CEIs, elected in October 2019, are taking office.

They should have taken office at the EI World Assembly this year but the assembly was postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Consequently, we held talks with EI and the outgoing CEIs on how to enable the new CEIs to take up the posts for which they were elected over a year ago. We reached the decision that the outgoing CEIs would resign to make way for the new members.

A meeting with EI and the outgoing CEIs was held on Monday 9 November to thank them for their work and also to obtain feedback on their experience.

Finally, I wish to thank the volunteer interpreters who are with us today and are making this meeting possible.

AGENDA ITEM	DISCUSSION / DEBATE	CONCLUSIONS DECISIONS
<p>1. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS</p>	<p><u>Approval of the October 2019 Regional Council minutes</u> None of the participants wished to make any additions, remarks or oppose the proposed minutes of the 31 October 2019 Regional Council held in San Sebastian in Spain.</p>	<p>The Regional Council unanimously approved the minutes of the October 2019 Regional Council: ✓ <u>For</u>: 22 votes ✗ <u>Against</u>: 0 votes ● <u>Abstentions</u>: 0 votes</p>
<p>2. CEI HANDOVER DISCUSSION OF THE WA/RA SCHEDULE</p>	<p><u>Presentation of the CEIs taking office</u> The outgoing CEIs having handed in their resignations, so the CEIs elected at San Sebastian have taken up their duties today.</p> <p><u>Discussion of the WA/RA schedule</u> Simon presented a PowerPoint presentation of a proposed future reorganisation of the RAEE meeting cycles following discussion with EI. The idea is to take into consideration the current discrepancy:</p> <p>Following discussion with the EI and EE executives, we thought that this would make for a very long period of office for the current representatives (until the 2025 WA) and we envisaged having a European assembly in 2023 with representatives elected for just two years until the 2025 world assembly. Further discussion took place:</p> <p>To date, we have held regional assemblies one year before the world assembly in Europe and six months before in the other regions because the sheer number of member groups in Europe prevents such a big event being arranged six months before the WA. We elect our international representatives but they only officially take office at the WA, hence the current situation. Apart from the pleasure of meeting up, the assembly's other role is to decide on regional strategic plans. However, these follow the international policy directions decided on three years earlier and which can then be amended the following year at the WA...</p> <p>We therefore conceived the idea of electing our representatives at half-day elective regional assemblies on the eve of the world assembly, so that these representatives could take office immediately afterwards. They would therefore have a year to organise strategic direction regional assemblies, adapting the international policy directions to the regional contexts, and</p>	<p>👁 Issue raised for discussion purposes.</p> <p>👁 Issue raised for discussion purposes.</p> <p>The meeting was broadly in favour of the presented option but Eduardo Sanchez stressed that he felt that electing European representatives at the same time as the WA would be problematic. The main aim of regional assemblies is to elect the region's representatives. Regional assemblies are a unique moment for each region. If the election of representatives was no longer a part of them, they might lose their meaning. The issue of when the regional president would be elected in this scenario was also raised.</p>

	<p>setting our priorities. The “strategic” regional assemblies would therefore be held in each region a year after the WA.</p> <p>These proposals are yet to be presented to the EI Board, so they are initial ideas.</p>	
<p>3. REPLACEMENT OF NATHALIE MARTZ</p>	<p>Nathalie Martz is unable to fulfil her duties as a new CEI because of her new contract with EF, and has submitted her resignation to the regional secretariat.</p> <p>A call for candidates was made to the candidates who were not elected at the last regional assembly. Two volunteered to stand for election:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maryse Faure - Michael "Spike" Hudson <p>Their RAEE applications were sent out again to the members of the RCEE so that they could make a decision.</p>	<p><u>Elected as a CEI:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Michael "Spike" Hudson: 16 votes <p><u>Not elected:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maryse Faure: 6 votes
<p>4. NATIONS ROUND-TABLE SESSION PART 1</p>	<p>Appendix 1</p>	
<p>5. FULL AND TRIAL MEMBERSHIP</p>	<p><u>Trial membership applications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 100 pour 1 pays Rochefortais - ACI Ré-emploi - Emmaüs OGF – Ferme de Baudonne - Emmaüs Pontivy - Emmaüs Primelin - Sos Familles Emmaüs Forbach - Sos Familles Emmaüs Millau - Tero Loko - Terra Alter Est <p><u>Full membership applications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emmaüs Coup de Main Pantin - Emmaüs Saint-Nazaire - Emmaus Aselogna - Emmaus Florence - Emmaus Palermo - Emmaus Norfolk & Waveney 	<p>The Regional Council officially recorded the granting of trial membership to nine Emmaus France groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <u>For:</u> 22 votes ✗ <u>Against:</u> 0 votes ● <u>Abstentions:</u> 0 votes <p>The Regional Council approved the full membership applications submitted by six European groups: Coup de Main Pantin, Saint-Nazaire, Aselogna, Florence, Palermo, Norfolk & Waveney.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <u>For:</u> 22 votes ✗ <u>Against:</u> 0 votes ● <u>Abstentions:</u> 0 votes

6. ACTION PLAN

An updated version of the action plan was presented to the executive. The new version incorporates the contributions made by the January and March 2020 executives and has been sent to the RCEE for feedback and ranking in order of priority for 2021.

Eve received six positive responses to the action plan and there was no disagreement.

The six responses received prioritised the following four topics:

- Internal and external communications
- Rise to the challenges of reuse and recycling, notably for textiles with the 2025 requirement to separately collect textiles, and work out the potential impact on the groups.
- Develop and bolster the positive impact of groups' initiatives and know-how.
- Find a way of continuing to raise citizen awareness about freedom of movement, despite the pandemic.


Eve also mentioned Martha's proposal to organise a study group to help improve environmental practices in the movement.

She also raised Christian's idea of focusing on setting up a crisis unit which could work as required to respond to groups' life-threatening emergencies and communicate more effectively about everyone's news.

Regarding the suggested exchanges of practices, she added Anu's proposal to arrange a discussion on advocacy: namely how to start doing advocacy at the group level. Examples of local actions, initiatives raising awareness about the problem of over-consumption, or other issues.

As nobody had disagreed with the suggested priorities, they were deemed to have been adopted for 2021.

Eve emphasized that at the RAEE it was noted that there were not enough social issues in the policy directions or in the exchanges of practices, even though social issues are at the very core of what we do. She asked the RCEE for its opinion on this matter and on the issues which could be prioritised in this area in 2021.

 The action plan and the priorities for 2021 were adopted as presented in the document sent to the RCEE. Particular attention will be paid to the issues raised during the email and videoconference discussions.

José María wished to remind the meeting that the root causes of poverty can only be addressed by advocacy and the development of awareness of the struggle, coupled with concrete advocacy aims.

He also said that the place of the companions in the movement needs to be rethought. Are they people in their own right or the beneficiaries of solidarity delivered by volunteers?

Regarding the issue of addressing climate change and environmental issues, José María said that groups need to undertake a self-assessment to see if our practices are really in keeping with our ideas in this area.

The circular economy package has not yet been implemented in all the countries and it is important for the Emmaus groups to monitor this major policy change made at European level. The new policy should now be rolled out by the states. Finally, it should not be forgotten that capitalism and its consumption patterns are the main cause of climate change and we need to undertake advocacy on these issues. Finally, we must ensure that these online meetings do not become the norm.

Paul agreed with José María and was happy with the action plan. However, he felt that we need to place a greater emphasis on the coronavirus crisis. We are in the middle of a global/international pandemic, and he felt that our communities and groups are going to be faced with more people wanting to join them. He asserted his companion status and stated that he believed that different groups should offer social reintegration. He felt that not all of our groups have the same shelter and support capacity to help all poor people, and that there will be more poor people, and communities are already often overcrowded. “We need to discuss social reintegration in our groups but we also need to reinvent ourselves with regard to shelter and support, and reintegration. When we welcome companions, we need to help them to reintegrate into society and help them to find a job, which would also enable us to welcome new companions when those who have found work leave the community.”

As there were no further items on the agenda, the president closed the meeting.

Carina Aaltonen
President of Emmaus Europe

Aurore Querel
Secretary of Emmaus Europe

The national delegates were invited to liaise with the CEIs from their country to answer the following questions:

What are the prospects for Emmaus in your country? How do you think that the coronavirus crisis will impact our work at the European level? What ideas do you have about doing things differently in a future that looks different to what we knew before (“the new normal”)?

Germany

There are five Emmaus groups in Germany.

Income is down but the groups are doing quite well.

They are selling online and are trying to reach out via social media.

They have increased the work done in day shelters with food distributions (most of the other centres had been shut down). People were no longer able to take a shower and do their washing in day shelters during the first lockdown. This was very tough for people living on the streets.

The drop in income is going to make it very difficult to pay the minimum wage to all the companions.

It is still very important to continue supporting the groups in greatest difficulty.

Belgium

There are three Emmaus groups in Belgium.

Collections have been suspended for now. But the groups are selling fruit and vegetables.

The bookshops are open and a click & collect service has been introduced.

Expenditure has gone down because income has also dropped.

At the present time, new groups cannot be set up in Belgium because the Belgian authorities are making life difficult for organisations by toughening the law and increasing administration costs.

We meet via videoconference. We hope that things will improve from 13 December onwards.

Spain

Communication is quite fluid in Emmaus Spain. We have been able to keep in touch with the seven groups, even if some have not always taken part or answered emails.

There are five member groups and two trial members.

Some groups are starting to show an interest in the Emmaus Movement and would like to get more involved. We are currently supporting a group in Pontevedra.

We are trying to encourage these groups to adhere to and join the movement, while ensuring that they fit with our internal values, namely advocacy issues coherence, and coherence with the values of

the Emmaus groups, so that there is cohesion with the national organisation. We make use of the EI information packs when new groups want to join.

Our groups have had difficulties, but they are now resuming work. Some have been affected by COVID-19.

Spain is the country in Europe hardest hit by the global pandemic. We hope that things will improve.

Sales have dropped.

France

The French Emmaus groups have all been seriously affected by the coronavirus and the future feels very uncertain. This puts into perspective any future prospects, or at least for the coming months.

It is difficult to mobilize the groups about projects when they are so concerned about simply surviving. However, we feel that it is right during this time to place the emphasis on collaborative tools, regular discussions, and fostering supportive synergies.

The current crisis shows that we need to take action for “a different world” and Emmaus France has not waited for the crisis to come to ponder this issue, as it is work area 3 of our strategic project.

All the European groups in their current model will be affected by this crisis.

We need to develop other economic models, particularly for farming and market gardening, and even stockbreeding, whose markets will be geographically closer and are also a good fit with our values.

We need to develop other areas such as shared “green” space maintenance, caring for the natural environment, working to lobby local government on this aspect wherever possible.

The advocacy work undertaken in each country should have an impact at the European level, so there is also a need to work with the MEPs in each country. We also need to pool our efforts to communicate about our vision for change. We might be surprised about how attractive and hopeful the Emmaus model may seem to people. Our resilient and combative ways of addressing issues are real assets that should be exploited and showcased.

Finland

There are four groups in the country.

This crisis has enabled us to reflect on the values and consequently to prioritize activities.

In the future, the Finnish groups are going to manage their budgets with greater care. Opening hours may be reduced if there are not enough volunteers to staff the shops. They may well have to reduce the amount they give to solidarity in order to keep operating (for instance, Helsinki used to donate up to 40%, but now it will just be 25%).

We need to focus on more important topics. For instance, do we need to listen to news from each country? A slight overload of news. It is a good idea to hold more remote meetings in the future, but we need to adapt them so that remote meetings are shorter and more dynamic.

Italy

ND handover.

In the short term, the groups will be affected by the shops potentially having to close again. A regional approach is being applied in Italy.

Difficult to plan for next year.

It is important that we remain focused on the most vulnerable people, notably migrants. Partnerships between groups on both sides of the border need to be developed.

16 groups, no COVID-19 cases > this is good news.

Online sales are not an option in Italy because of legislation. Tried to incorporate this change into the amendment of their statutes needed in 2020 but proved impossible within the time allocated.

Netherlands

Fewer customers because of the restrictions.

Most of the groups have received government support.

Emmaus NL is working on an action plan and the secretariat is going to recruit a part-time member of staff to cover international relations. This will help get the groups more involved in the movement's international work.

Second wave of the virus has arrived in the Netherlands.

Poland

Populist government does not know how to react. Not a full lockdown yet, but culture, sport and big stores have closed down.

Four communities in Poland. One had to self-isolate for 10 days and another looks likely to have to do so shortly.

Romania

Gélu sends everyone his best wishes and said that the pandemic is difficult for all.

Need to consider setting up a national organisation in Romania and start by working more on communication between the Romanian groups and with the other groups in Switzerland, France etc. He hopes that borders will not be closed.

He hopes to see more solidarity and better adaptation following COVID-19.

A social-medical centre has opened in conjunction with the outreach work.

UK

Incompetent government and the highest death toll in Europe. Groups have survived the first wave, with government support. Second lockdown, and probably another after Christmas.

It is hard to remember that we are stronger together and to continue working together.

This context is a real opportunity to promote our model and what we do.

Ukraine

Two groups (one full member and one trial member). The groups have managed to maintain their core activities, notably food distributions, and awareness-raising about the pandemic. Good support from the local population during the first lockdown.

Many people have been hit and national statistics are not very reliable.

Very difficult situation for people, high unemployment. New lockdown until the weekend.

Recent regional elections, with more power given to the regions: the groups hope that this will mean better support for them from regional government.