



**Poland / Ukraine Collective
Report
14 October 2020 videoconference**

PROVOCATEURS DE CHANGEMENT

Participants:

Willi Does, **Emmaus Cologne, Germany**
Benedikt Zecha, **Innsbruck, Austria**
Carina Aaltonen, **Emmaus Åland, Finland**
Helka Ahava and Ulla Hoyer, **Emmaus Helsinki, Finland**
Alexis Jacquot, Chantal Odeyer, Charles Valegant, Clara Martel, Dominique Saubiez, Gabrielle Fuentes, Jean-Louis Evrard, Régis Marmoux, **Emmaus Annemasse, France**
Marie-France Bedleem, **Emmaus Armentières, France**
Maryse Faure, **Emmaus Chalon-sur-Saône, France**
Elena Azra, **Emmaüs Longjumeau, France**
Pierre Dubois, **Emmaüs Mutualisation Rhône-Alpes, France**
Irène Meunier, **Emmaus Roanne, France**
Giorgi Ghelaghutashvili, **Emmaus Geo, Georgia**

Salvis, Jean Amblard, Solvita Fibiga, **Amis 3, Latvia**
Augusta Kierienė, **MPFSC, Lithuania**
Jos van der Meer, **Emmaus Haarzuilens, Netherlands**
Casper, Grzegorz Hadjuk, **Emmaus Brat Albert, Poland**
Ela Guc, Zbigniew Drązkowski, **Emmaus Lublin, Poland**
Grazyna Moskal, **Emmaus Rzeszów, Poland**
Simon Grainge, **Emmaus Coventry, UK**
Andrij Savka, Taraz, Vasyl Golod, **Nasha Khata, Ukraine**
Mariana, Natalia Sanotska, Oksana Buchkovska, **Emmaus Oselya, Ukraine**
Eve Poulteau, Marie Tixier, Théo Robin, **Emmaus Europe Secretariat**

The Poland/Ukraine Collective met for the first time since March 2019 because the regional assembly was held in October 2019 and then the meeting scheduled for May in Metriena (Latvia) was cancelled.

European solidarity in 2021

Financial support

It was stressed that the various programmes are important. Therefore, the option needs to be kept open of supporting groups elsewhere in the world if the coronavirus situation puts them at risk, and of relaunching a European programme, which is important as it enables the group to become more self-sufficient. There is a need to keep underlining the importance of solidarity as the cornerstone of our movement, while being mindful of the fact that the situation is now more difficult for the contributing groups. Consequently, the 2021 programme needs to remain modest. If necessary, the Emmaus Ethical Fund could also fund bigger projects.

Emmaus Brat Albert needs a new vehicle, which could come from another group. Emmaus Geo may need support to buy a plot of land on which a warehouse would be built, and Nasha Khata is planning more renovation work on the Drohobych house.

Shared container loads

All the groups stressed a real need for container loads at this time, and the participants wish to keep taking part in this programme. For the record, Emmaus Europe has set up a one-off container support fund and any group can request funding by contacting the secretariat.

Group news

Poland		
The government provided a small amount of wage support during lockdown but overall, little was done and there is very little clarity about coronavirus measures.		
Emmaus Brat Albert	Emmaus Lublin	Emmaus Rzeszów
<p>The coronavirus situation has forced the group to restructure. The group had to ensure that as few volunteers as possible worked, which prevented the companions from working at the shelter and meant that employees had to be utilised instead. While the recovery was strong, the months of March and April accounted for a 50% loss. The situation is stable but is still uncertain. The transport programme is very important at this time. Furthermore, the group may need a new vehicle and is looking for any second-hand vehicles available within Emmaus.</p>	<p>The group implemented several local solidarity initiatives during the crisis. It made its vehicle available for distributing food, and prepared meals for military personnel. Regarding the projects underway, the group is awaiting a council decision on the legality of the construction of the new shop, which got underway slightly before planning permission was granted. The group is also undertaking renovations in the first community house, and has bought the pizza restaurant, which it had been renting. The offices were burgled at the end of lockdown and losses amounted to €4,500.</p>	<p>The group is continuing its efforts to get back on an even financial keel, with the help of Pierre Dubois. All the loan repayments are being made on time and a lot of savings have been made. Local collections continue to be satisfactory. Despite it all, container loads are still crucial, particularly at this time. The group had to self-isolate for a fortnight in September because a companion fell ill.</p>
Ukraine		
It is anticipated that the schools will close down again before the end of October. Furthermore, stricter measures will undoubtedly be introduced after the elections on 25 October.		
Emmaus Oselya	Nasha Khata	
<p>The group has continued its solidarity work with the homeless, arranging distributions of food, raising awareness about the epidemic, and conveying their views to the authorities. None of the 25 companions and employees has fallen ill and the crisis has strengthened community unity. However, the group has had to make two shop assistants redundant. Sales have recovered well and the group has made as many savings as possible in anticipation of potentially having to close down again. Regarding activities, the association now has 29 collection points in the city. The construction of the new warehouse has been postponed, and the project is now scheduled for completion in summer 2021.</p>	<p>The group had to stop attending street markets and reduce the number of employees in its shops at the start of the crisis. One of the employees subsequently became a companion. The group did a lot of work on the farm and in the furniture workshop (where the building work has finished) during lockdown. The situation has improved and the four shops have reopened, and the group is attending street markets once again. It has also increased the number of clothing collection containers. There are currently 44 companions in the main building and 18 in the new house in Drohobych. The renovation work has been completed in two bedrooms in this house. The intention is to fix the road near the first building this year. The Innsbruck group once again covered the wages in 2020 and is planning to do so in 2021.</p>	

Georgia	Latvia	Lithuania
Elections are set to take place this year and this is a source of great tension. The coronavirus is spreading significantly across the country.	The country is currently contending with the second wave and schools are getting ready to close down again.	The country was in lockdown from 16 March to 16 June. A second wave is starting and could lead to a new lockdown being imposed.
Emmaus Geo	Amis 3	MPFSC
<p>The shop had to close during lockdown and it was difficult to pay the rent. Emmaus Annemasse supported the group in this respect. A truck was fitted out for mobile selling, which will enable the group to cope if the shop is closed down again. The sewing workshop enabled a large number of masks to be produced and sold during this period. The group also carried on with local solidarity, distributing food to some 100 families (roughly 260 people).</p> <p>The group has found an affordable plot (700m² costing €7K) on which to build a warehouse and therefore save having to pay rent, and has savings (approximately €2,200) that it can invest in this project.</p> <p>With regard to the situation in Armenia and Azerbaijan, the group is approaching local associations in order to identify needs and possible forms of support.</p>	<p>The group helped retired people by giving them food parcels during lockdown. The group also took advantage of lockdown: it refloored the shop and developed an external storage building for bikes. Masks now have to be worn in the reopened shop.</p> <p>The group received container loads from Emmaus Fredriksdal during lockdown, as well as from Annemasse, EMRA and Angouleme (scheduled) to support the restart.</p>	<p>The association has a shop, which officially opens two afternoons a week, but can welcome customers almost all the time.</p> <p>A lorry load from some German groups, scheduled for the end of the month, is eagerly awaited.</p> <p>It might be a good idea to restart the MPFSC's membership application.</p>

Other countries
The other groups attending the virtual collective also spoke about major difficulties, notably during lockdown, but stressed that overall things have gone quite well since they restarted work. Some found alternatives, notably providing services to businesses. All the groups managed to continue their solidarity work wherever possible, particularly sending container loads. The future remains uncertain for everyone.

Thank you to Amis3 for preparing for the May meeting, which unfortunately had to be cancelled, and to the participants for the worthwhile debate!