



**Romania Collective
Report
9 October 2020 videoconference**

PROVOCATEURS DE CHANGEMENT

Participants:

Carina Aaltonen, **Emmaus Åland, Finland**
Maarit Kinnunen, **Emmaus Westervik, Finland**
Marie-France Bedleem, **Emmaus Armentières, France**
Maryse Faure, **Emmaus Chalon-sur-Saône, France**
Jean-Luc Ferstler, **Emmaus Forbach, France**
Annie Le Moing and Freddy Ouari, **Emmaus Rédénié, France**
Gilles Thèvenon, **Emmaus Roanne, France**

Rodica Bizu, **Amicii d'Emmaus, Romania**
Dana-Maria Andron, Gelu Nichitel, Leila Thouret, **Emmaus Iasi, Romania**
Jean-Philippe Légaut, Paul Darouèche, Sorin Onica, **Emmaus Satu Mare, Romania**
Simon Grainge, **Emmaus Coventry, UK**
Vincent Gasparini, **Emmaus Sion, Switzerland**
Eve Poulteau, Marie Tixier, Théo Robin, **Emmaus Europe Secretariat**

The Romania Collective met for the first time since May 2019 because the regional assembly was held in October 2019 and then the meeting scheduled for April in Chalon-sur-Saône (France) was cancelled.

European solidarity in 2021

Financial support

It is difficult to anticipate what will happen next year, but the groups want to continue rolling out their projects in order to develop their activities and work with more people in difficulty. Indeed, even if we need to remain ready to respond to emergency situations, help also needs to be given to the groups to strengthen in order to be more resilient when future crises of this kind strike, and to be able to continue with their work. The 2021 programme will nevertheless need to remain modest as the European groups may struggle to donate to it.

Emmaus Iasi will need support for finalising its project on the Belvédère plot, and Amicii d'Emmaus wants to build a new community house on the new plot, with the end goal being to have four houses. Emmaus Satu Mare should not need support in 2021 because several large-scale projects are already underway.

Shared container loads

It was emphasized that the container loads are still very important, and the participants wish to carry on taking part in this programme. A large number of groups outside of Romania have received a mountain of donations during the lockdown and are able to ship these donations to the country, but do not necessarily have the budget to do so, or do not know how to arrange a shipment. The Emmaus Europe Secretariat can help the groups with both aspects: a container load support fund has been set up and funding can be requested by any group, and a container guide is currently being finalised and will be sent out soon.

In France, two platforms are receiving donations from businesses and are distributing them to any French groups that want to receive them. It might be worthwhile seeing if some of these loads could be sent to communities elsewhere in Europe. The EMRA group has already facilitated this type of shipment to Latvia and Romania, for instance.

Group news

Amicii d’Emmaus Târgu Jiu	Emmaus Iasi	Emmaus Satu Mare
<p>The group had to close for roughly two months and is now starting to resume work. Support was provided for the orphanage throughout the period and all the sales activities have now resumed. Collections are working well and supply enough textiles to fully stock the shop and solidarity work with the families.</p> <p>Amicii d’Emmaus has secured European funding to open a social enterprise: €80K will be allocated over a period of one year eight months. The enterprise will focus on reuse, upcycling and recycling. The profits will support the work of the Emmaus community.</p> <p>The plan to build a community house ran into difficulties because the group did not secure the necessary funding. A house was finally purchased in early 2020 with the help of Emmaus Forbach. It has four bedrooms for companions and is 2,800m².</p>	<p>The group quickly joined forces with other local associations to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. Specifically, the partnership with the food bank proved to be very important because food is a big item of expenditure for the community and outreach work. Emmaus Iasi distributed meals, clothing, toys etc and above all helped the homeless.</p> <p>A significant amount of awareness-raising work was done about the increased vulnerability of the homeless during this period. As a result, the group has secured funding to open an emergency shelter for the homeless: four modules will be bought and installed on a plot close to the community and made available by the local council. The outreach team will work there.</p> <p>The group took advantage of the shutdown to work at the Belvédère, where the warehouse is practically finished.</p> <p>The future looks difficult: the group does not have the resources to operate if it is closed down. The state has provided support via the furlough scheme, but this means that employees cannot come to the community, which is not always possible. New sources of income need to be found.</p>	<p>The young people and some of the team stayed in the house for two months. Everyone’s ability to stay “locked down” for such a long period was a cause for concern, but everything went well in the end from a social and educational standpoint. The charity shop was able to reopen in mid-May and things got more or less back to normal from June onwards, but finances have been a problem over this period.</p> <p>The projects that were already underway have continued. Six flats were purchased (instead of five as initially planned) as housing for the young people, and repayments are now being made, so that the fund should be able to continue helping other young people. As for sales, the small clothing store was closed as agreed, and an Emmaus Ethical Fund loan has enabled a new 500m² shop adjacent to the new warehouse to be bought. The new shop enables the group to sell more goods, particularly furniture, at lower prices, which is important at this time. Furthermore, four young people are currently on placements in France and Switzerland, and the education team has been strengthened by the arrival of a new member of staff.</p> <p>Finally, the group has won a court case against the state and is now entitled to staff recruitment grants, which is an excellent piece of news for Emmaus Satu Mare and the non-profit sector in general.</p>

Thank you to Emmaüs Chalon-sur-Saône for preparing for the April meeting, which unfortunately had to be cancelled, and to the participants for the worthwhile debate!