



Minutes of the Regional Council of Emmaus Europe (RCEE)

4 February 2021

Video conference



emmaüs
EUROPE

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MEMBERS OF THE REGIONAL COUNCIL			
PRESENT	Carina Aaltonen, President of Emmaus Europe, Finland Jean-Philippe Légaut, Emmaus Europe treasurer, Romania		
	NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES		NUMBER OF VOTERS
	Serena Lemmens, Germany Julio De La Granja, Belgium Sabina Arnaut Jahic, Bosnia-Herzegovina José Maria Garcia Bresó, Spain Anu Lahde, Finland Annick Berthier, France	Virginia Tallone, Italy Jos Van der Meer, the Netherlands Gélu Nichitel, Romania Tony Ferrier, UK Charlotte Wester, Sweden Jérémy Udry, Switzerland	12 voters
	COUNCILLORS OF EMMAUS INTERNATIONAL (CEIs) – EUROPE REGION		NUMBER OF VOTERS
	Mikel Azkona, Spain Christian Calmejane, France Rosa Gil Elorduy, Spain Simon Grainge, UK Martha Hannus, Finland	Michael “Spike” Hudson, UK Aurore Querel, Emmaus Europe Secretary, France Eduardo Sanchez, Spain Amanda Steckly, UK Maria Luisa Testori, Italy Leila Thouret, Romania	11 voters
	EX OFFICIO MEMBER		
	Patrick Atohoun, chair of Emmaus International		
	GUEST PARTICIPANTS WITHOUT VOTING RIGHTS	Secretariat of Emmaus Europe	
	Nathalie Pere Marzano, El chief executive Hélène Perrot, Emmaus International Secretariat Thomas Bodelet, Emmaus International Secretariat	Véronica Acevedo-Caro, admin-finance assistant Marie Tixier, events coordinator Théo Robin, solidarity coordinator Eve Poulteau, EE chief executive	
	APOLOGIES RECEIVED	Grzegorz Hajduk, ND for Poland, Grigory Semenchuk, ND for Ukraine	

<p style="text-align: center;">Preamble</p>	<p>The morning of 4 February was devoted to training for the new CEIs and NDs. Almost all the members of the RCEE were able to attend the session. The training course focused on how the EU law-making bodies work and on our partnerships at the European level, as well as news from our focus areas (European textiles strategy, the migration-asylum pact). The session was recorded, so please do request the file from the secretariat.</p> <p>An appeal was made during the training session, calling on members of the RCEE to monitor these work areas. Christian Calmejane and Rosa Gil Elorduy will focus on migration and will monitor the meetings with Migreurop. These meetings are held in French. Spike Hudson was willing to monitor the EAPN work area with Carina Aaltonen, and also volunteered to be the representative for the RREUSE partnership, as their communication is usually in English. We are still seeking members of the RCEE or of member groups who could monitor on behalf of EE the RREUSE working groups on textiles and the WEEE group (monthly digital meetings, needing someone who can speak English and has technical know-how in these areas. Please contact Eve if you have candidates or if you wish to volunteer yourself).</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Introduction</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>She also welcomed the following new members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tony Ferrier, the new UK national delegate. - Michael “Spike” Hudson, the new CEI <p>Carina accepted apologies from Grzegorz Hajduk, the Poland ND, who was absent on health grounds. She asked the meeting to make a screenshot wishing him a speedy recovery. And this was done!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-----</p> <p>Carina took stock of the current COVID-19 situation, which is making things difficult for the Emmaus groups and is increasing inequality. Governments prefer to highlight the case of big business to the detriment of human lives. The number of infections is rising markedly but hospitals are struggling to make available enough intensive care beds.</p> <p>A big thank you to the interpreters who make all of this possible, and thank you to the team who help keep the European dynamic alive.</p>

AGENDA ITEM	DISCUSSION / DEBATE	CONCLUSIONS DECISIONS
1. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS	<p><u>Approval of the November 2020 Regional Council minutes</u> None of the participants wished to make any additions, remarks or oppose the proposed minutes of the 12 November 2020 Regional Council meeting.</p>	<p>The Regional Council unanimously approved the minutes of the November 2020 Regional Council: ✓ <u>For</u>: 22 votes ✗ <u>Against</u>: 0 votes ● <u>Abstentions</u>: 0 votes</p>
2. REPLACEMENT OF PAUL DAROUECHE	<p>Paul Daroueché has resigned from his post of CEI, as he is no longer a companion at Emmaus Satu Mare. Maryse Faure is standing for election to replace him. She stood for election as a CEI at the 2019 RA and can therefore do so again in line with our statutes.</p>	<p><u>Elected as a CEI:</u> - Maryse Faure: 19 votes</p>
3. 2021 BUDGET	<p><u>Presentation of the 2021 budget</u> While awaiting the final figures for 2020, Jean-Philippe Légaut, the EE treasurer, presented the outline for the 2021 budget, which is prudent and balanced, because income from membership dues may be down in 2021 if the groups experienced a drop in income in 2020 because of the pandemic. Expenditure makes provision for a partial resumption of in-person meetings in the autumn, and several visits that we hope to make to trial member groups.</p> <p>He announced that an “Internal/external communications” heading has been created in the “Life of the Movement” section, because communications are one of our policy areas, and fit better in this section than in general administration as initially planned.</p> <p>We are planning to only request €25K from EI out of solidarity with the other regions.</p> <p>We have rationalised certain contracts to limit admin costs and this has enabled us to reduce our 2021 budget.</p>	<p>The Regional Council unanimously approved the budget for 2021. ✓ <u>For</u>: 22 votes ✗ <u>Against</u>: 0 votes ● <u>Abstentions</u>: 0 votes</p>

4. FULL MEMBERSHIP & TRIAL MEMBERSHIP

Full membership applications

- **Emmaus Preston**

Emmaus Preston is located in north-west England and was founded on 2 October 1998. The group has been an EI trial member since April 2014.

The community provides a home and rewarding work for 26 men and women, many of whom were formerly homeless.

The group runs a social enterprise and all the people living in the community stop claiming unemployment benefit in order to contribute to the charitable work in line with their capabilities.

Trial membership applications

- **Agame**

1901 law association founded in 2014 in Le Port on Réunion Island. The poverty rate in Le Port for under-30s is 64%, and over 46% of 18-25 year olds are unemployed.

The association was founded out of a desire to offer socio-professional integration opportunities and to help young people who have dropped out of education, as well as forging social bonds around IT. It received its first employment access scheme partnership agreement (ACI) in 2016.

The employment access scheme (ACI) aims to reuse computers to prevent WEEE waste and to promote digital inclusion by kitting out and training people who are digitally excluded. The group has been working in partnership with the two other Emmaus groups on the island for a number of years.

Emmaus Connect A French group following the simplified membership process, and working to address digital exclusion, has completed the process and will therefore be a member of EI after their next board.

Closures

SOS Familles de Neuilly in France
Utrecht in the Netherlands

The Regional Council approved Emmaus Preston's membership application:

- ✓ For: 22 votes
- ✗ Against: 0 votes
- Abstentions: 0 votes

The Regional Council officially recorded the granting of trial membership to Agame:

- ✓ For: 22 votes
- ✗ Against: 0 votes
- Abstentions: 0 votes

5. SOLIDARITY

2021 European programme update

Currently, seven requests for a total of €65K have been received:

- ISF (Bosnia-Herzegovina)
- CNZD (Croatia)
- TOMS (Croatia)
- Emmaus Geo (Georgia)
- Brat Albert (Poland)
- Emmaus Iasi (Romania)
- Nasha Khata (Ukraine)

The total requested funding amount is higher than the last two years but lower than what we put forward two years ago.

Detailed information about the projects will be presented at the March executive. Executive members are free to review the applications beforehand if they wish to ask the groups any questions. The projects will be scrutinised by the RCEE on 27 April.

El news

Food aid: in early 2021 a budget of €10K was allocated to Europe to support groups providing food aid during the coronavirus crisis. An appeal was made via our newsletter and three initiatives were given support: ISF, Geo and Oselya.

El wishes to run a different programme in 2021 but still with a crisis theme and three priorities: bolster the groups' work in response to the crisis, create new activities on the same grounds, and finally fund advocacy. There is a budget of €600K. Applications will be examined on a quarterly basis, instead of once a year.

El is going to ask for a description of the groups. We can ask all the groups to undertake this task, or only those who submit applications.

 Issue raised for discussion purposes.

6. DEBATE ON THE ISSUES AT STAKE

How to help more while maintaining our political independence?

Discussion facilitated by Simon

Simon: We know that we will have to help more in the coming years because sadly poverty is likely to increase. From the standpoint of your group and the context in your country, how do you think that your group could help more? One of the options chosen by many groups in order to help more is to receive public funding or secure employment access scheme or other public service delivery contracts. However, what are the limitations of this type of contract if we want to remain politically independent and therefore adhere to one of Emmaus' main values? Do you have shared values on this topic in your country? Do you think that we should set shared rules at the European level of Emmaus?

In the UK, for example, several groups receive public funding, for instance Emmaus Preston receives funding for doing outreach work with the homeless, and this has proven to be very useful during this period, but what is your perspective from your country?

Christian: We wanted to diversify in our community and extend our provision by opening a centre funded by the state for people who have nowhere to sleep at night and can therefore take shelter at our centre. It is called 115 in France and every night we provide a bed for 80 people. We also have a day centre. We also set up an employment access initiative in September. My feeling is that we have received much greater recognition from the state since then, notably for our ability to work with people from different cultures and who speak different languages.

With regard to foundations, it is important to look into who we are working with, but with the state I feel that our involvement in public projects funded by the state enables us to influence policy a lot more than when we only work in our own community.

And we also have the great satisfaction of welcoming so many people who rub shoulders and interact.

Annick: In France when an association signs a contract with the state for employment access scheme workers it works as follows: service delivery with prices known to all and in order to get back into work people who were long-term unemployed.

 Issue raised for discussion purposes.

During the COVID-19 crisis local government gave a great deal of help to the Emmaus groups without demanding anything in return. I feel that the risk is greater when working with foundations or companies who want to make use of the Emmaus name. Emmaus is unique in that it gets people back to work so that they regain their dignity. Employment access schemes funded by the state do the same thing as community stakeholders.

Maria-Luisa: Our founding texts state that we must be self-sufficient and remain uninfluenced by any external powers.

When we take government money, it is hard to say that “I don’t agree with your policies.”

She quoted Lucie Coutaz (we realized after that it was a speech of the Abbé Pierre given in Italie).

“There are two dangers to Emmaus. One danger is wanting to perfect the way of life of the communities, their method of working; perfecting this beyond a certain extent, taking on commitments to carry out something technically bigger than the ordinary collection work of a ragpicker. We frequently see communities around the world which try to push the community to do more, technically, than rag picking work. I do not know of any examples where this has ended well. Why did it end badly? Because to be able to perform this greater work, gradually we are forced to exclude those who are less skilled, less strong, less stable.

And there are examples of when a commitment to do some work has been taken on, and we are forced to hire completely normal workers and we end up becoming like any old company.

It is not worth it. It is not bad, it is good - but it is not our mission.

Our mission is to have an open door, up to the point where mental health issues prevent us from doing so. The door is open so that all those who are suffering in society, materially or morally, can come in, temporarily or for life.

And I often say to new leaders and to friends: “Watch out, you need to have a good think when you arrive at a community; if you were used to business, a normal company, you have to take your head and turn it upside down. Because if you work in a company, for Fiat or whoever, well, what happens?”

You say, I want to produce this, so to produce this I need these types of people, I will advertise, I will recruit, then if the person is good, everything is fine, and if the employee is not good, you show them the door. When you come to Emmaus it is exactly the opposite. You open a door, you look at who enters and you wonder: What can we do together with this man, or that one, as he is now?

And the work is continuously adapted to those who arrive. It is exactly the opposite of a company and this must be clearly understood.”

JP: In Romania, the state subsidizes the recruitment of people with disabilities and young people in difficulty but only by companies. The Satu Mare group requested that third-sector associations should be allowed to do so and won its case. Likewise, during the COVID-19 crisis, the state supported business recovery but not third-sector organisations under the pretext that our economic activity has a social vocation. We feel that it is unfair that billions of aid is being allocated to business and not to social economy organisations such as our organisation.

Sabina:

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, there are practically no social initiatives for the most vulnerable members of society, and we seek to make up for this. We are almost compelled to make use of public funds and help from foundations. In our country the economic activity of third-sector organisations is taxed in the same way as businesses, so it is almost impossible to be independent when running a social economy-type economic activity. We also have to have a contract with the authorities in order to deliver provision for trafficking victims and asylum seekers. We have never been constrained in any way. We select the people and the target groups. We are highly independent and not politically constrained by these public contracts. The same goes for our partnership with the other groups.

Jose Maria: It is vital that groups have a clear political stance and that we constantly scrutinize whether we are coherent. Therefore, today's debate is very important and needs to be continued.

We also need to use language precisely: there is a difference between grants and delivering services. Moreover, our action should also enable us to influence public policy.

In Pamplona we have received regional government grants to build our premises. Over the course of our development, we have exerted political pressure so that Emmaus' vision and the ethos underpinning our activities are incorporated into regional public policy on waste collection and sorting.

One of our advocacy campaigns focuses on public contracts so that they always include a minimum number of social economy organisations and employment access schemes with over 50% of people with social difficulties in their workforce.

I think we must always go back to our core values:

Community = sharing.

Work as a means of making a living, and we have obtained what we now have through our hard work (service delivery, in particular).

Combatting poverty and advocacy work.

Any grants received should not cover our basic needs but instead should enable us to help the community with solidarity.

Simon: It is true that the world has changed greatly and we must always reassess our values in the light of our current challenges.

Serena: In Germany, the companions are often unemployed people who come to work at Emmaus to rebuild their lives. This tends to be covered by a six-month funding agreement with the state but the agreements have been extended because of the pandemic. We also receive public funding for a day centre that welcomes homeless people and people in difficulty to discuss politics and democracy. However, the German groups do not receive any grants apart from these two types of funding.

Virginia: In Italy, we have always championed the communities earning a living from their own work. The risk with public partnerships is no longer being able to criticize policies (local council policy, for example).

It is also important not to receive funding from banks or foundations with links to undemocratic initiatives or the arms trade, for example.

Aurore: Employment access schemes using state funding have their legitimate place in Emmaus, but the community model needs to remain independent of

	<p>this funding so that we can unconditionally welcome companions and particularly undocumented people.</p> <p>Annick: In France, there are groups funded by public funding (committees of friends).</p> <p>Christian: The different ways of funding our work are not incompatible.</p> <p>Jos: Most of the groups in the Netherlands are independent. Several groups have waste collection contracts with local authorities and one of the groups receives state funding if companions are employed, while another receives state funding for its childcare provision. Should we accept that more public funds will be granted to other associations for their work, and would it compromise the independence to which we are particularly attached at Emmaus? This debate is also taking place in our country.</p> <p>Simon: Thank you to everyone for your contributions. Grants have increased during the coronavirus crisis: is this going to change our way of working? And what about places where we cannot have traditional communities? Does being involved with the authorities enable us to be taken more seriously? We need to be clear about the language we are using and what a “grant” means. We need to be innovative in the services that we offer but also have safeguards in place in our partnerships so that we do not put at risk our values. For instance, are we in agreement about the outcomes expected by funding bodies?</p> <p>Some very interesting points were raised here and we need to continue the debate.</p>	
<p>7. Upcoming meetings and events</p>	<p>It was proposed that the digital RCEEs should generally be held from 15:00 – 18:00 CET and in line with the schedule presented at the last RCEE. Everyone agreed. Reminder that the next meeting will be on 27 April.</p>	

	<p>The Tour of Europe is restarting, with the next virtual visit being to Italy on 18 February.</p>	
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Additional information provided by Gelu: Things are moving in Bucharest where Elena is making progress in setting up an Emmaus group in the capital, and we hope that one day the group will potentially have an influence on policies.

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