



# REPORT – ROMANIA COLLECTIVE

## 14/15 October 2021 – TARGU JIU, ROMANIA

emmaüs

EUROPE

### **PARTICIPANTS:**

Jean-Luc FERSTLER, *Emmaüs Forbach*, **France**

Minodora CARNU, Rodica BIZU, Tudor CARNU, *Amicii d'Emmaüs*, **Romania**

Gelu NICHITEL, Leïla THOURET, *Emmaüs Iasi*, **Romania**

Jean-Philippe LEGAUT, Sorin ONICA, Viktoria ELEK, *Emmaüs Satu Mare*, **Romania**

Elena ADAM (par téléphone), **Bucharest, Romania**

Paul DAROUECHE, *Tarra Social*, **Cluj, Romania**

Eve POULTEAU, Théo ROBIN, *Emmaüs Europe Secretariat*

Hélène PERROT, *Emmaüs International Secretariat*

Rodica welcomed all the participants to Târgu Jiu.

Théo will leave Emmaus Europe in early November, and will be replaced by Emmanuel, who has already spent almost two years at the Satu Mare group.

The meeting documents are available online:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/tuxon7szalcvlv6/AADSLAs1Lw7TZCqSqOjlLbCka?dl=0>

### **New groups**

Two new groups are in the process of being set up in Romania, in Bucharest and Cluj (see detailed information below). This raises the issue of the availability of additional containers to support the launch of these groups without penalising the existing groups. This task could be undertaken by Emmaus Europe, and it would seem possible to mobilise new sending groups.

Moreover, the movement lacks collective mechanisms to financially support new groups. At the present time, initial funding must be sought from direct partners. The collective discussed the possibility of Emmaus Europe and Emmaus International setting up mechanisms to fund the development of new groups. It was reiterated that this is not currently part of the movement's policy directions, but it would seem that the question at least deserves to be asked.

### **European solidarity in 2021 and 2022**

Four funding applications for 2022 were mentioned.

Emmaus Forbach wants to organise a youth camp in Târgu Jiu with Amicii Emmaus. The youth camp would bring together four-five Forbach companions, four-five Algerians from a partner association, and members of Amicii Emmaus for two-three weeks, with the aim being to help Amicii with its extension work.

**Emmaus Forbach will apply for €10-15K.**

Amicii Emmaus wants to extend the community, and in particular build a storage area with sorting and repair workshops (textiles, domestic appliances, woodworking). The first phase would be to build a 200m<sup>2</sup> workshop, and then possibly two others of the same size. They would be built alongside the shop on the 6,000m<sup>2</sup> plot of land already owned by the group. The project would run for three years. In the first instance, the group will need €10K to start the project and undertake all the formalities for planning permission and mains electricity and water connections. The Forbach youth camp will help with the building work.

**Amicii Emmaus will request €25K.** Forbach could provide additional support. For the future, the group would also like to build houses for the companions, and will maybe look into EU funding for this project.

Emmaus Iasi wants to continue with the development of the Belvédère. Specifically, the inside of the building needs to be fitted out, and the building needs to be connected to a water (borehole, €5K) and electricity (solar panels, €15K) supply. The group will invest €5K of its own funds.

**Emmaus Iasi will apply for €15K.**

Tarra Social (Cluj) is thinking of applying for support to launch its activity. The group is firstly going to discuss possible forms of solidarity with the Swiss groups, before considering applying for European and international solidarity.

**Tarra Social might apply for a maximum of €5K.**

## **Creation of Emmaus Romania**

The Romanian groups met in 2021 to lay the foundations for a national organisation, and also drafted its statutes. Emmaus Romania's aims will include a higher profile and recognition from the country's politicians, improved communication with the movement's governing bodies, and support for new groups. The national organisation may also decide to join Romanian networks to increase its impact. Joint communication is planned, with a website, and representatives from the three groups will sit on the board, at least at the outset.

The aim is to finalise the proposed statutes, working with Hélène and the EI statutes group, in order to get them ratified at the March board, and to ensure that the statutes comply with EI's rules. Legal submission of the statutes could then take place quickly. In the meantime, the length of terms of office still needs to be decided, and maybe include the process for appointing the national delegate.

The groups are also thinking of subsequently working on a charter to set out Emmaus Romania's aims.

## **World Assembly**

The world assembly is held every four years and brings together the movement's 425 groups. The assembly is the opportunity to elect Emmaus International's chair and decide on policy directions.

The 2020 WA was postponed and will take place in two phases, a videoconference from 30/11 – 2/12/21, and then in Uruguay in May 2022. The Uruguay meeting is important, as just one WA has taken place outside of Europe, and there has never been one in South America (despite a failed attempt), which is a historic place for the movement following Abbé Pierre's

brush with death as a result of his boat sinking, and it would highlight the groups in the region and their work.

The last WA in Jesolo (Italy) decided to arrange a forum of alternatives, international work camps, publish a global report, etc., which has been done. As for the forthcoming assembly, several preparatory sessions have taken place, particularly focusing on two topics: self-sufficiency and solidarity, and belonging to the movement.

Topics that do not require too much discussion will be addressed online, while discussions about the future and the movement's policy directions will take place in Uruguay. Groups can now register and need to do so quickly by 5 November: information, documents and the programme can be found on [assemblee-mondiale-emmaus.org](http://assemblee-mondiale-emmaus.org). Emmaus Iasi has already registered, while Emmaus Satu Mare and Amicii Emmaus are planning to do so.

There should not be any financial issues for the Uruguay assembly, as Emmaus International has set aside reserves to cover the expense. There may be some reluctance on environmental grounds (this issue was raised in 2011). The topics are relevant, and in particular it is worthwhile refocusing on internal issues and pondering our identity.

## **Global report**

The first Emmaus global report on its fight against poverty will be published on 17 October 2021, with the aim of demonstrating that poverty is not an inevitability. The publication date coincides with the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

Resources are available to bring to life the report in the different countries, each Emmaus group can make use of the communications kit which has been sent out in order to publicize the report to local and national media outlets.

## **Financial self-sufficiency and the future of our income-generating activities**

The participants discussed the future prospects of the groups' income-generating activities, and notably the impact of the EU separate waste collection directive on the second-hand sector.

Some groups are developing new income-generating activities in response to the rising competition or to simply diversify their sources of income. Amicii Emmaus wants to set up workshops so that they can make better use of the donations that they receive, and also start a small bike repair business. Emmaus Iasi has farmed for a long time, and a European exchange of practices on this subject is planned for 2022. In Satu Mare, several ideas are under consideration, in addition to improving sales: the group is envisaging opening a small rural guest house, which could accommodate tourists and would provide a calm place for some young people to stay for a while. Disabled worker status for some young people could also enable the group to tender for service contracts with some institutions and administrations (cleaning, for instance). Finally, the group is developing a purely profit-making initiative (the Emmaus name is not associated with it): a recruitment service for businesses. This income-generating activity does not enable inclusion (because it is difficult to involve the young people in it) and serves only as a support for the rest of the initiatives.

With regard to waste, there is a real lack of awareness in Romania, both among individuals and politicians. The few separate waste collection

containers are hardly used, and waste is not even always processed separately after sorting. The ministry itself is not really up to speed with the issue. As for the place of the Emmaus groups in the new waste collection system, national operators are already well-established and have contracts with the various supermarket chains, for instance. Târgu Jiu Council has had a textile platform project since 2017, but no progress has been made.

Emmaus Iasi succeeds in managing most of its waste by working with associations that recycle it, but this type of organisation does not exist everywhere in Romania. A network brings together third-sector organisations working on waste, and a meeting could be worthwhile.

## **Migration**

There was no time to tackle the item on migration.

## **Group news**

### **General situation in Romania**

The country is experiencing significant political instability, with frequent changes of government majority. The national budget was only passed in a vote in April 2021, which delayed the vote on local budgets, and consequently the allocation of funding, which is not retrospective. The absence of a government is preventing work on the new guardianship law. The last version was abolished for being unconstitutional, so there is currently no framework for people in need of protection (psychical problems, etc.). Likewise, the work of the RISE network on the status of social enterprises has been suspended due to there being no government representative available. Finally, gas and electricity prices increased by 60% and 45% in September, and the minimum wage is set to increase by 12% in January (which is always good news, but entails another increase in expenditure for the groups).

## **Next meeting**

The idea was raised of holding the next collective next autumn in Switzerland, for instance in Fribourg, as the Swiss groups seem to want to support the new group in Cluj, and have already been involved for a long time. To be confirmed with them.

Leila could be the new collective representative, even if we will continue to focus on contacting all three groups at the same time when preparing for meetings.

Amicii Emmaus Târgu Jiu	Emmaus Iasi	Emmaus Satu Mare
<p>The association has been operating since 2011 and takes the form of several organisations: Lumea Emmaus sells second-hand goods, the NGO Recoredi is the social enterprise, and a social day centre delivers vocational training.</p> <p>The team comprises six paid employees and around a dozen highly active volunteers.</p> <p>The association was founded to support the Nos enfants d'ailleurs children's centre, and has become its main backer, to the tune of €3,300 per month. In summer 2021, a Scout group came to work with the centre's children.</p> <p>The shop floor covers almost 1,000m<sup>2</sup>, but there is practically no storage space. Most of the stock comes from the container loads, of which the group receives 15-16 per year. Textiles come from the three clothes bank donation points in the city. They are emptied once a week. 15-20% of the clothes are suitable for sale, while the remainder is used for social initiatives, and some items are thrown away.</p> <p>With regard to investment, the group has completed the work on the shop. A 2,890m<sup>2</sup> plot with a house was purchased using a five-year €75K loan extended by Emmaus Forbach. The house has been fitted out to accommodate the social and vocational training centres. In the end, the house has no overnight accommodation, but the group is keeping in mind the idea of building accommodation on the land in order to house companions in the longer term.</p> <p>The social enterprise was founded with the help of the European Social Fund and should soon be self-sufficient.</p> <p>Emmaus Forbach financially supported the association during the pandemic.</p>	<p>The association currently has 10 paid employees, and almost all the companion places are occupied.</p> <p>During the pandemic, an appeal for donations made to partners, customers, friends and companies (who can benefit from tax reductions) worked well. Moreover, Iasi Council recently allocated the group funding of €16K for its outreach work (the first council funding received by the group).</p> <p>The harvest was very good at the Belvédère this year. The building has been completed and the shop section will soon be fitted out. Solar panels are currently being fitted (5kW, €6K), and the group plans to repair the access road, which is impassable in winter. 400 fruit trees were planted last year (apples, plums, pears, quinces, walnuts, apricots, etc) thanks to the Belgian association Mergem's sponsorship, and the first harvests should be ready in three years' time, and will enable the fruit to be processed and sold. An area of one hectare has also been fenced off to make an enclosure for potential farm animals.</p> <p>In Popesti, Simona has become leader and the companions are alone at night at the present time, and this is working well.</p> <p>A food bank partnership has come to an end, and has been replaced by a new partnership with fresh and quite good quality products, which is positive for the outreach work and for the community's own meals. Roughly 300 people a year are supported by the outreach work (the group has already encountered 90 people in two weeks this year). The meals are always prepared by the partner restaurant, as the group is not allowed to cook in the community for non-community members.</p>	<p>Currently, the group has eight paid employees and 20-25 young people.</p> <p>The housing project for young people has enabled seven young people to access a flat in two years, but the group must keep a watchful eye to ensure that the properties are not sold on quickly (the group has a mortgage on the houses). This project was supported by EE, EI and FAP.</p> <p>Several young people who seemed ready to leave the community have returned because they encountered problems, often of an affective nature. The group has started discussion groups about emotional wellbeing to prepare the young people for what they might encounter, and has bolstered the social team (three people including a new member to replace Ivett, who has left).</p> <p>Very recently, the last third-sector organisation in the area to manage a children's home contacted Emmaus Satu Mare (the other homes are government homes and are often badly run). The leaders wish to close down their initiative and are suggesting that Satu Mare takes over, which would notably involve being legal guardians for the children, specialised support work, etc. Seven children currently live in this home and a live-in couple manage the home on a day-to-day basis.</p> <p>From an economic perspective, the group decided to give up the small clothing store in the city centre in early 2020, because sales figures failed to meet expectations, and instead bought the second section of the building being used as a warehouse. Some work still needs to be done and then the building will be fit for purpose. Since July 2021, sales have returned to pre-pandemic levels, and there is still potential for improvement.</p>



## New Emmaus groups in Romania

Bucharest	Tarra Social, Cluj
<p>Elena was unable to attend, but a short telephone call was organised.</p> <p>Elena is optimistic but is awaiting the end of the COVID-19 crisis to discuss the project with the local council. The council needs to approve the provision of a building for 99 years (maximum authorised by law). The social welfare system manager knows Emmaus and supports the project, as well as Bucharest City Hall and the district town halls. The building would be perfect for workshops and a shop, it is close to the centre, and has floor space of roughly 1,000m<sup>2</sup>. The building already contains a small woodworking workshop and a few tools: everything that is needed to repair and build new furniture.</p> <p>Businesspeople are also willing to support the initiative once it is up and running, and some businesses, particularly French companies, such as Lafarge, are willing to support the building repair work. A businessperson has also suggested buying a farm close to the city for a second tree growing project. A meeting with the French embassy is also planned. The group needs to remain compliant with the EI partnerships charter.</p> <p>The team comprises three social workers, a psychologist, a volunteer doctor, and other volunteers from the third sector and a range of businesses. Everyone is a volunteer at the present time.</p> <p>The social workers are in the process of working out the target group, i.e., the adults who will work in the future Emmaus group, prioritizing the poorest and most vulnerable people.</p> <p>The group is doing charity work, particularly with children, while awaiting the green light for the building.</p> <p>The idea is to start by launching the shop and workshop, using solidarity container loads, if possible. A partner has also been identified and could donate furniture with small defects. The group could consider starting local collections right from the outset, given the size of Bucharest.</p> <p>There is no plan to provide support and housing in the first three months, meaning that the workers will come from other accommodation facilities at the start. The idea is to gradually house them in the building to make a real community.</p> <p>A support group needs to be set up to monitor the project.</p>	<p>Tarra Social was founded in 2021 with the aim of becoming an Emmaus group. Out of the three founder members, two have worked at Emmaus Satu Mare, including Paul, who spent three and a half years there, and was elected to sit on the EE Regional Council for a year.</p> <p>Cluj is one of Romania's three largest cities, and just like Bucharest, it is quite wealthy but also has a large community of very poor people.</p> <p>The association started renting a warehouse in early October (400m<sup>2</sup> in the airport area for €1,300 per month) and has engaged the services of an accountant. A first container load of goods is arriving from Switzerland on 15 October, and Emmaus Fribourg has provided funding of €5K. A small team is already actively involved in the project and the container will be unloaded by a dozen people in the absence of Paul.</p> <p>The idea is to start selling from the warehouse, and then to rent a shop from December-January. At the same time, the plan is to involve three companions but not house them in the first instance. The social component of the initiative will be based on shelter and support for companions based on the French model, which will comprise social support, counselling, literacy, training, etc.</p> <p>Links have been forged with the Lions' Club and Bird Brother association. The former could host a private sale in December, and even fund the purchase of a vehicle. The latter could provide support for the social support component and for identifying potential volunteers.</p> <p>The projected budget for the first four months is €17,000 and notably includes wages and rent. There is a need to identify one or more partner groups willing to help fund the creation of this group. Moreover, the small support group needs to keep a close eye on developments, and Gelu and Jean-Philippe could travel to Cluj in early November.</p>

**Thank you once again to Amicii Emmaus for hosting and arranging the meeting, and to the participants for the worthwhile discussions!**

Emmaus Europe is the decentralised Emmaus International organisation in Europe.

Report – Romania Collective – Targu Jiu – 14-15/10/2021 – page 6/6