



# SOUTH-EAST EUROPE COLLECTIVE MEETING REPORT

## 30 OCTOBER 2021 – OSIJEK, CROATIA

emmaüs

EUROPE

### Participants

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All documents related to the meeting are available online:

[https://www.dropbox.com/home/CREE/2021-10\\_CollectifEuropeSudEst/EN\\_WorkingDocuments](https://www.dropbox.com/home/CREE/2021-10_CollectifEuropeSudEst/EN_WorkingDocuments)

## EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY IN 2020 AND 2021

In 2020, the European and international solidarity programmes (ESP and ASP [annual solidarity programme]) were suspended to make way for emergency programmes. €1.2 million was raised by the movement to help the groups experiencing the greatest difficulties. A single group in Europe benefited from this emergency programme.

In 2021, the ESP and ASP resumed alongside a number of emergency programmes, specifically support for groups' food aid initiatives. In Croatia, the ESP supported TOMS (electric delivery scooter) and CNZD (the media studio, which already employs two people), and it also helped to fund an initiative in Poland.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the ASP is helping Emmaus-IFS to fit out the kitchen in the centre for elderly people in Srebrenica.

For 2022:

- Nova Generacija wants to obtain new premises for the association's and the Blue Line's offices. Emmaus Europe already holds funds for the group, and an additional application for €5K (maximum amount for a trial member) could be submitted. The initiative needs to be clarified, and can be discussed with the secretariat between now and the end of November.
- TOMS wants to secure funding to buy a plot of land on which to build offices, enabling them to bring together all of their activities in the same place. While the association is not allowed to submit a solidarity application two years in a

row, it can apply for a loan from the Emmaus Ethical Fund run by Emmaus International, request a bank guarantee, or bridging funding; in this way receiving money to cover the period until a third-party funding body provides funding.

## SUPPORT FOR NEW GROUPS

### Resources available to trial member groups and mentor groups

The discussion focused on the following three points:

- Emmaus Europe needs to provide more support for mentor groups, with the help of more specific guidelines. The intention is to develop such a resource in the very near future.
- Emmaus Europe could provide more financial support for the first investments made by groups wishing to join the movement: this question falls within the scope of the development strategy wanted by the movement, and could be discussed at the RCEE.
- Emmaus Europe could offer more opportunities for new groups to visit existing groups to form bonds and provide development ideas.

- The view of Emmaus-IFS, the mentor group for groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia

Emmaus-IFS raised the issue that they have experienced of how to position themselves with regard to trial member groups: what its remit and boundaries were as a mentor group, what its obligations were, how to suggest without influencing, and what EE's expectations were of trial member groups.

- The view of the trial members

Nova Generacija (NG) had not understood that the income-generating activity enabling groups to become self-supporting could differ from the traditional work of the Emmaus groups, i.e., second-hand clothing stores. It was reiterated that it is the movement's fundamental values (working *with* and not *for* people, involving them in the income-generating and social initiatives, as a minimum seeking to be financially independent, etc.) which are important, and not specific operating methods. Each group knows the context in its area and knows what is most appropriate or effective. With regard to mentoring, CNZD highlighted the importance of being followed up by Sabina in order to incorporate the movement's rules. Communication between the groups could be improved, and the creation of exchange of practice forums would enable the know-how built up by the various groups to be put to good use. Furthermore, the group raised the issue of funding when a group wishing to join Emmaus is being set up. The most important factor is helping the group to find premises or a plot of land where it can set up.

TOMS felt that the mentoring by Emmaus-IFS was highly significant and had had a real impact. The idea of developing a social restaurant came from the meetings held with Emmaus-IFS. The trip to visit Emmaus groups in Paris gave them the idea of potentially opening a second-hand furniture store in the long term. The group feels that a second-hand clothing store would not work.

## 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). Everyone is invited. As a reminder, new groups and trial member groups can take part in the debates, but are not allowed to vote. Furthermore, financial support is available to enable groups in difficulty to make the trip to Uruguay.

CNZD has already registered for the assembly, and Emmaus-IFS is also going to register.

## **GLOBAL REPORT**

The first Emmaus global report on its fight against poverty was 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.

## **MIGRATION**

Overall, public opinion on the issue of migration is divided in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, without there being extreme polarisation and without the issue generating a real debate on identity. Some local councils or counties help migrants more than others, while the national governments are not putting forward sustainable migrant support solutions. This may be because both Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina are transit countries in which migrants have no desire to settle. Bosnia-Herzegovina also has a unique relationship with migration and refugees, as the country experienced a war and major population displacement in the 1990s. This explains why some migrants receive help from local people.

Croatia may be urged by the EU to push back migrants to the Bosnian border as part of the process of joining the Schengen Area. A large number of videos showing migrants being beaten up and driven back to the border by the border police are doing the rounds online and shocking the country's population.

Emmaus-IFS commented that the gender and age of migrants has changed since the summer and developments in Afghanistan: instead of single males, the outreach teams are coming across many families with children. As of October 2021, Emmaus-IFS has counted over 200 children in less than a year. Most of the migrants do not want to enter refugee camps, as they would be registered and locked up, without the possibility of continuing their journeys. These camps are located far from the Croatian border. Migrants prefer to take refuge in abandoned trains or warehouses. Emmaus-IFS, with the help of Emmaus Italy and other Italian charities, supports migrants by handing out hot meals, and opening centres enabling them to take a shower, charge their mobile phones, and change their clothes.

Emmaus-IFS has signed an agreement with the government to house isolated foreign minors in their centres, in return for government funding. On the other hand, no agreement has been reached to give leave to remain to migrants and refugees wishing to stay in Bosnia-Herzegovina. According to Emmaus-IFS, 5,000 wish to stay and could be employed in the building industry. Political instability has made this agreement impossible. Moreover, the ministry for home affairs wants to take back control of migration, but has no funding to do this. The EU has not been able to develop a state partnership which could provide aid, so it prefers to support third-sector associations.

NG remarked that Banja Luka council has no intention of helping migrants. It also attempts to organise anti-migrant demonstrations, but these efforts fail. This shows that public opinion is not so grudging and unreceptive to the issue of migrants in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

### Suggestion

The groups would like EE to raise the awareness of the groups in Western Europe about the initiatives being run by some members of the collective to help migrants, by distributing food, opening day centres, etc. It was reiterated that many groups across Europe, particularly those close to national borders, are involved in similar work.

The development of shower places in Bosnia-Herzegovina would meet the immediate needs of the migrants who want to continue their journeys to the countries of Western Europe.

## GROUP NEWS

### Bosnia-Herzegovina

Emmaus-International Solidarity Forum (IFS)	Nova Generacija (NG)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Duje centre:</b> Shelter and support for socially and medically vulnerable people, social reintegration programme.</li> <li>- <b>Centre for children and teenagers from challenging family backgrounds:</b> educational, cultural, sporting activities, and educational support.</li> <li>- <b>Support for elderly people</b> in the Doboj Istok and Srebrenica region: medical follow-up care, distribution of meals, home help service.</li> <li>- <b>Sponsoring orphans:</b> covering school fees, and activities aimed at families experiencing social issues.</li> <li>- <b>Boarding school:</b> Accommodation, schooling and extracurricular activities in Potocari.</li> <li>- <b>Day centres:</b> Potocari, Zvornik and Doboj, provision for children and organising educational and recreational activities.</li> <li>- <b>Humanitarian aid</b> in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Syria and Bangladesh (Rohingya community).</li> <li>- <b>Partnership in Burkina Faso:</b> Funding school fees, donating school materials for children.</li> <li>- <b>Distribution of hot meals</b> in Doboj, Srebrenica, Bratunac, Gracanica, Tuzla and Doboj Istok for people in difficulty and elderly people.</li> <li>- <b>Farming:</b> the group produces 40 tonnes of vegetables.</li> <li>- <b>Summer camp:</b> Hosting 80 young people from 10 countries in Potocari, taking part in the commemoration and initiatives to support people in the region.</li> <li>- <b>Human trafficking prevention work:</b> Refuge for potential victims, support for undocumented migrants, running the European Resource Centre.</li> <li>- <b>Child protection:</b> Using new technologies to prevent child exploitation. Preventing violence against children.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Three work areas focusing on children at risk</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>A children's centre:</b> the number of beneficiaries doubled (60 children) during COVID-19. 20 children come every day. It is impossible to accommodate more.</li> <li>- A new programme: <b>Family empowerment</b></li> </ul> <p>A result of the observation that solely working with the children is not enough. A family counselling service has been set up in conjunction with the council. Two states. 50 families. Every week, meetings are held with the children and their parents, or just with the children. The team has received psychotherapy training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Economic environment:</b> Deliver an education and foster new skills in the children supported by the association, and who are now teenagers or young adults, to enable them to enter the labour market more easily.</li> </ul> <p><u>Other activities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Blue Phone telephone</b> hotline for reporting violence against children. Funded by UNIVCEC, funding is not secure for 2022. The hotline was very important during COVID-19. The association has extended its children's services to adults. 10,000 calls were received from children and adults during covid. The number of calls dropped, as lockdown made it impossible for people to pick up the phone and speak. The association therefore developed a chat app for children, as it is more discrete than making a phone call. The operating hours were extended so that no calls were missed (9:00 – 22:00). 25 reports of violence against children were made. One or two cases of violence are reported every day.</li> <li>- An activity in partnership with the universities: <b>All the brothers and all the sisters:</b> this gives the children the chance to socialise with volunteers (visiting the city, activities, the chance for them to get to know each other).</li> <li>- <b>House rebuilds:</b> in November, the association is going to rebuild a new house, in conjunction with a TV programme.</li> </ul> <p>NG has also floated the idea of developing training and awareness-raising for businesses about violence against children. The association is also considering how to leverage its stress management and time management know-how. All of this still requires time and consideration at their end.</p>

## CROATIA

**The Regional Council of Emmaus Europe approved the membership applications made by the two Croatian groups to join the Emmaus movement. The EI Board will give a final opinion in March 2022.**

### Centre for Missing and Exploited Children - CNZD

#### Activities

- **Eight half-day provision centres for children:** many children were more at risk during covid. However, the pandemic did enable society to better grasp mental health issues.
- **Half-day provision centre for Roma children** The centre has provision for 20 children, and provides clothing, computers, meals, showers, etc. The association used EEF bridging funding to rebuild the premises, as the government funding was not paid out. The ministry is going to repay this loan.
- **Safer Internet Centre:** a hotline and helpline, which are receiving increasing numbers of calls. This period is the first during which the association has had a waiting list (83 people) for adult/child advice services.
- **Hotline for missing children:** The association is receiving increasing numbers of calls from migrants. The situation is difficult and needs to be discussed.
- **A new building for the future health clinic:** Many children and parents are unable to have counselling because of a lack of accommodation. This clinic will offer them free accommodation while they are having counselling. Around 600 children need this type of support and are not entitled to benefits. Local government and the state are going to provide some of the funding, as they can perceive the added value provided by the association.
- **Children in poverty monitoring programme:** help with going to school, new clothing: mobile team, psychologist, social worker, "reaching out".
- **New fundraising methods**
- Awareness-raising campaign based on real-life stories for children. A major IT company in Zagreb has printed 10,000 books. €120,000 should be raised by selling these books, and a lot of companies are buying them.
- Develop training for companies on mental health issues, and the risks of the online world for children.
- **Future plans** Keen to open a centre for children who are going to turn 18, able to house eight to 10 people. The association will build three houses in March. This will constitute an important milestone for the organisation.

### Association of People with Physical Disabilities - TOMS

- **Social inclusion centre** Awareness-raising and addressing the isolation experienced by elderly people. Free cookery, games and sports activities. The centre has 30 users, aged 74-80. EU funding of €270,000 for an 18-month project (7/21 – 12/22). The association wishes to secure the long-term future of this project.
- **Social inclusion restaurant** The *Leptir Buffet* provides employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The association is trying to obtain a special status in order to receive state funding by becoming a social enterprise. The association wants to increase the restaurant's capacity and provide meals during the winter months. The restaurant opened in June 2020. Idea: get the restaurant supported by state funding, and increase the capacity. Thanks to funding from Emmaus, the association has been able to buy an electric scooter for food deliveries.
- **Home help service** Help the over-65s who are unable to live independently, by delivering fruit and vegetables, providing meals, doing cleaning, etc. This project involves 25 formerly unemployed people, who each help four to five people, making for a total of 160 beneficiaries. €300,000 for a year. The association wants to secure the long-term future of this project (bridging funding extended by the government).
- **Equine therapy workshops** The association has acquired two horses who were set to be slaughtered and will use them for the equine therapy project aimed at children with disabilities.
- **A half-day centre for children** Family empowerment. 25 beneficiaries and families. A psychologist, therapist, a visual therapist, and a social worker. 150 child beneficiaries.

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

