



# MINUTES OF THE REGIONAL COUNCIL OF EMMAÜS EUROPE

## 26/10/21 - VIDEOCONFERENCE

emmaüs

EUROPE

### **PRESENT 25 VOTERS**

Carina Aaltonen, Sabina Arnaut-Jahic, Mikel Azkona, Marie-France Bedleem, Annick Berthier, Christian Calmejane, Julio De La Granja, Maryse Faure, Tony Ferrier, Jose Maria Garcia Bresó, Rosa Gil Elorduy, Grzegorz Hąduk, Martha Hannus, Michael Hudson, Anu Lähde, Serena Lemmens, Robert Opoka, Aurore Querel, Grigory Semenchuk, Amanda Stekly, Virginia Tallone, Maria-Luisa Testori, Leïla Thouret, Jérémie Urdy, Jos Van Der Meer, Charlotte Wester.

### **GUESTS**

Patrick Atohoum, Nathalie Pere-Marzano, Hélène Perrot.

### **EUROPE REGIONAL SECRETARIAT**

Eve Poulteau (chief executive), Marie Tixier (events coordinator), and Théo Robin (solidarity coordinator).

### **APOLOGIES RECEIVED**

Jean-Philippe Legaut, Gelu Nichitel.

<b>FOREWORD</b>	<p>Welcome/Some participants met last week at the last EI Board, for the first time in two years, and the next time we will also all be back together in Paris in February. Thank you to the interpreters.</p> <p>Two collectives arranged in Latvia and Romania, and at the weekend in Croatia. It is clear that we are gradually resuming, even if things will not be just like they were before, some meetings are going to remain online, for example, one out of two executives.</p> <p>Grzegorz and Robert are in attendance to hand over as ND for Poland. Annick will be replaced as the France ND at the next meeting by Pierre-Yves, the EF treasurer.</p>
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AGENDA ITEM	DISCUSSION / DEBATE	CONCLUSIONS   DECISIONS
1. Approval of the minutes	The RCEE approved the minutes.	Minutes approved unanimously.
2. Group income-generating activity sustainability – future issues	<p>During our previous discussions about group independence, we realised that there was a need to discuss the issues faced by the groups in Europe with regard to their income-generating activities. A few written contributions were received and included in the working documents.</p> <p>Discussion issue: In your countries, are there any risks/issues? Emergence of new players and competition, new constraints caused by EU regulations, etc. Identification of the problems encountered and potential solutions put forward or envisaged.</p> <p>Christian: Two waste reception centres in the local area since 2007 /managed free of charge by Emmaus Montauban &gt; accounts for roughly 60m<sup>2</sup> of goods collected every day / no financial transactions with the local councils, just a basic agreement / he hopes that the new regulations will not prevent this from continuing, as this operating method works for everyone.</p> <p>Serena: the issue of the minimum wage increasing in Germany &gt; difficult for certain groups to pay as many companions as needed for the activities they carry out / groups' sales levels have not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels.</p> <p>Annick: Drop in the quality of donations / people are firstly trying to sell online before donating as a last resort / this will be an issue in the years to come, it would be worthwhile diversifying our economic models.</p> <p>Anu: See written contribution/ income has dropped since the start of the pandemic / poor quality donations and, at the same time, customers are looking for good-quality items to purchase/ in Finland the textiles and other items recycling system is still under development.</p>	

Tony: See written contribution /customers are slowly returning to the shops/ discussions underway in the UK about the economic model, should groups agree to contracts with the public authorities, or not? /The movement needs to speak out more, and there is even competition in this area, given the number of NGOs in the UK.

Virginia: Second-hand goods are still the main income-generating activity in Italy/the pandemic is not the only problem, there is also increased competition/ idea of focusing on online sales.

Luisa: NB, in Italy, online selling is complicated and even forbidden, so the groups are looking for a way of getting around this problem.

Jos: Written contribution/ work with councils, do not receive funds but have agreements to not pay for waste disposal/fast fashion is generating a lot of textiles that cannot be used.

Jérémie: Our communications are the issue, people just see the Emmaus charity shops, and we need to talk more about the idea of shelter and support, and the community, to showcase Emmaus' unique character.

Jose Maria: complicated issue, depends on local circumstances. In Spain, the emphasis is on the right to be a companion in order to earn a living and take part in solidarity/the authorities are starting to recognise the role of social stakeholders, but in Europe, there is still no real recognition of the social economy/ we need to keep working on this issue and better publicize our work, and assert the importance of our work in order to champion our traditional model.

Charlotte: In Sweden, some groups receive funding but maintain considerable freedom, the issue is the time spent doing admin/the groups are not yet sure how to get to grips with the issue of the new EU regulations.

Julio: The same situation in Belgium as in France / customers are back in force after the pandemic and income has reached the same level as before / but there is a lot less shelter and support, particularly undocumented migrants and single parents with several children > difficult for a community/some companions live outside the community and claim benefits, and they come to work at the community for a couple of days / different laws in the three administrative regions, which are a problem for managing the groups (La Poudrière straddles two regions, for instance).

Grigory: Ukraine outside the EU/ the main problem is that the groups find it hard to generate a small amount of surplus income, which could be used for investment (for repairing vehicles, for instance), or to expand the groups and develop new projects.

Leïla: Groups in Romania rely mainly on container loads sent by the other groups/also development of new activities: farming, guesthouse, business services, upcycling...

	<p>Robert: In Poland, donation quality is poor, and the groups only accept 20-25% of the goods offered &gt; slightly better in urban areas than in the country / development of new activities: furniture renovation, for instance / specific situation in Rzeszow, as the group still has big loans to pay back (around €7K a month), and therefore must generate bigger profits than the other groups, difficult to talk about self-sufficiency when the group needs to make such big repayments to the bank.</p> <p>Jose-Maria: It is important to set boundaries and what we can accept in our income-generating activities, without betraying our values and fundamental principles.</p> <p>Eve /Summary Among the issues raised, standards and “contracts” recognising the role of the social economy encourage us to continue our work with the EU, but also to draw inspiration from each other with regard to the local application of EU directives (see mandatory separate collection of textiles in 2025). For instance, we can draw on the experience of Emmaus Navarra in order to negotiate with the authorities to obtain specific contracts based on our social benefit. EE is available if countries wish to work on the application of the directives.</p> <p>Regarding the issue of donation quality, related to fast fashion and competition for online second-hand sales, among other issues &gt; it is important to make people aware about Emmaus in all of its facets to show that we do not just run charity shops. This dimension could be included in the reuse campaign in the groups. We have planned to work on this campaign in 2022.</p> <p>Finally, we are noting a shared need to diversify our income-generating activities, and we could perhaps support the groups in this area by holding an exchange of practices in the first instance. Shelter and support developments and the issue of salaries need addressing in addition, because this was not planned at EE level.</p> <p>Nathalie: A question being raised outside Europe is that of the informal economy, i.e., workers without workers' rights.</p>	
<p><b>3. New full and trial member groups</b></p>	<p>Several visits took place in June, with Leila (Georgia), Carina and Maryse (Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia).</p> <p>Geo (Georgia) and Nova Generacija (Bosnia-Herzegovina): proposal that they remain as trial members. These groups did not feel ready, but their activities are very promising, meaning that they should be able to join the movement in the near future.</p>	<p>CNZD membership (Croatia): For: 22 Against: 1 Abstention: 1 The RCEE was in favour of CNZD becoming a full member.</p> <p>TOMS membership (Croatia): For: 20</p>

	<p>CNZD (Croatia): numerous initiatives to combat child exploitation, including with Roma children, day shelters, emergency phoneline, educational support, counselling, etc. Several development projects, notably using EU funds.</p> <p>TOMS (Croatia): works with people with disabilities, people with disabilities sit on the board/eco-activity: opened a restaurant in 2020, difficult start with the pandemic, but seems to be working, and have service provision contracts with various local councils / as well as advocacy initiatives for the rights of people with disabilities.</p> <p>Based on the reports, these groups are quite financially stable, which is positive, but as they have services contracts, are they able to take part in the international solidarity sale? Yes, some have already contributed to international projects.</p> <p>Have these groups paid their trial membership dues? Needs to be checked, but in any case they have been clearly informed about the dues to be paid as trial members.</p> <p>When we refer to self-sufficiency, we are also generally seeking to get involved in the social economy, and it might be worthwhile checking that these groups' initiatives are social economy-related. The social economy has a broad reach, provided that resources are invested in social initiatives.</p>	<p>Against: 2 Abstention: 2 The RCEE was in favour of TOMS becoming a full member.</p>
<p><b>4. Migrant reception in Europe</b></p>	<p>Amanda asked to discuss what we were doing in light of the situation in Afghanistan. At the last executive meeting, we decided to provide funding for ISF-Emmaus, which is helping to support Afghan refugees on the Serbia-Croatia border.</p> <p>We also heard at the PU Collective that the situation was also very complicated on the borders with Belarus, particularly the Poland-Belarus border.</p> <p>As this issue is becoming very important once again in Europe, Carina suggested that we step up work on these issues over the coming months on the executive and with those wanting to be involved.</p>	

	<p>Annick: Spoke about the situation in Briançon and an association (<i>Le Refuge</i>) which supports people crossing the border.</p> <p>Robert: Several organisations and activists work with refugees in Poland. The Polish groups have sent a letter to the government to reiterate that border security is not more important than human rights.</p> <p>Luisa: The Italian groups are going to continue the campaign to support migrants on the Balkans route. They raised €100K last year. This year, they want to publicize the campaign differently: they have designed a poster and leaflet with Renzo (Villafranca) and Leila (Emmaus-ISF) to communicate about this issue.</p> <p>Jose Maria: The Spanish groups are taking action about the situation of the migrant agricultural workers in the Huelva area.</p> <p>In France, a hunger strike has started in Calais + a petition &gt; supported by EI and EF &gt; a wide-ranging movement could be getting underway.</p> <p>Carina was sorry that the discussion time was too short. The discussion needs to be continued. Please submit news/contributions in writing + volunteer to work on this issue.</p> <p>Amanda: volunteered to join a working group.</p>	
<p><b>5. 2022-2023 Action plan</b></p>	<p>The next RCEE will provide an opportunity to work in greater detail on the action plan, but the plan needs to be generally approved in order to put together the 2022 budget.</p> <p>OK overall, but maybe focus more on migration, given the news.</p>	<p>OK for now.</p>
<p><b>6. Global report</b></p>	<p>Important to bring alive the report. Initial repercussions: good level of interest from the media in France at the launch, continue with local media outlets.</p> <p>The campaign is just getting underway, and will last six weeks until late November/diverse, accessible resources, to be publicized as much as possible on social media (viewed 200,000 times to date).</p> <p>UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty is suggesting a meeting + Council of Europe human rights commissioner (in Strasbourg) has also responded positively.</p> <p>Feel free to inform EI about all the groups' initiatives. If the groups wish to translate the report into other languages, EI can format it + plus order more.</p>	

<p><b>7. World Assembly</b></p>	<p>Urgently need to register as soon as possible and submit the proxy, otherwise will be denied access to the voting software.</p> <p>Currently 200 registrations from roughly 120 groups. Documents sent out today.</p>
<p><b>8. 2023 RAEE</b></p>	<p>The next RAEE should take place in 2023, and it is time to launch the process, notably seeking a host group &gt; approval of the venue and date at the February RCEE.</p>
<p><b>9. Conclusion</b></p>	<p>We wish to sincerely thank Grzegorz for representing Poland with panache for many years, and Annick for her commitment at the same time as being EF president.</p> <p>Théo was also thanked for his excellent work on European solidarity, and everyone wished him “bon voyage” to Madagascar.</p>

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