

Emmaus in Europe

January 2023



emmaus

europe

ACTIVISTS FOR CHANGE

Dear friends,

Thank you and your group for the solidarity and support you have shown during the last year, especially when it comes to the Ukraine Fund and the groups in Ukraine but also locally and nationally. Thanks to your contributions, the Emmaus Center in Lviv is ready to open its doors to homeless and internally displaced people. But all of us are, in one way or another, affected by Russia's unjustified and unprovoked war against Ukraine. It has highly impacted energy and food costs beyond European borders. **Let the new year be a year of solidarity and sharing in Europe and the rest of the world. Acting together makes us stronger.**

We have a busy year in front of us at the European level.

In the spring, we will organize an exchange of practices in Poland. The summer will bring us our first Emmaus football cup for human right and peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina. And finally in October, we will meet in Iasi, Romania, for a forward-looking Regional Assembly, with discussions, workshops, and elections! And every day, we need to fight the causes of poverty, the climate crisis, racism, and overconsumption.

Although your days might be hectic, promise me to take time off to meet or talk to other Emmaus people and groups. We are now 425 groups across 41 countries worldwide. It's impossible to get to know all of them, but we can start sending off a message to one or two people or groups you have lost contact with since the pandemic. Let's tie in stronger bonds between us and join forces.

Carina Aaltonen

Chair of Emmaus Europe



Spotlight on

Back to activism with the Emmaus in the Netherlands!

Lately the Emmaus groups in the Netherlands have been acting more together and locally to raise the public awareness on different issues (migrations, overconsumption) and with different partners (extinction rebellion, the Dutch design week, etc.)

This month we meet with the new National Delegate for the Netherlands, Yvette Gumbs, to ask her all about it.



- Hi Yvette, your last action was on the eve of the International Migrants Day, can you tell us more about it?

The number of undocumented migrants in the Netherlands is estimated to be between 25,000 and 58,000 people. They are often asylum seekers who have exhausted all legal remedies or people with an expired residence permit. Most have been living in the Netherlands for more than 20 years. Due to their status, they live with many insecurities. For example, they often do not know whether they will have enough to eat, a roof over their heads or access to health care. In addition, they run the risk of being exploited. Children born here have no vision of their future and live a shadow life that is hopeless because they have no papers.

Many undocumented migrants have been affected by the coronacrisis. For example, they lost their job as a cleaner or their job in the hospitality industry. Because they are not entitled to benefits or help from, for example, the food bank, they often no longer know how to get food.

We set up a kind of guerrilla campaign with all Dutch Emmaus branches. All branches saved clothes, shoes and school supplies and these were brought to Amsterdam on Friday 16 December by the drivers. We were allowed to use a church in Amsterdam for free to set up a pop-up store for a day.

Saturday 17 December we jointly built up the pop-up location and handed out items for free, our statement was: :
Let's give a voice to all undocumented migrants on Saturday 17 December in Amsterdam! The idea was also to say that we were doing our part in welcoming the migrants and that the government should do his.

The action was very successful, and the Emmaus branches liked working together it and it was visible to show people what Emmaus stands for and to jointly do these kinds of actions. A good example of fighting together to help those in need. We even got an email from the municipal of Amsterdam stating that they were grateful for our action.

· **It has actually been quite important developments in the Netherlands recently regarding the migrants rights and the recognition on the impact of Dutch colonisation...**

In October, a court ruled that the Netherlands was not meeting international standards and said the government should ensure every asylum seeker had access to a roof over their heads, food, water and sanitary provisions. The court also ordered the state to take immediate action.

[Read more...](#)

European Regional Assembly

What about becoming a CEI (Councillor of Emmaus International?)

At the Emmaus Europe assembly on 24-27 October 2023, the European groups are going to elect their representatives to sit on the Emmaus Europe and Emmaus International boards (the CEIs).

We therefore decided to interview **Leïla Thouret**, who will be finishing her period of office in October, to inspire you to become one of the Europe12's CEI.



For starters, could you tell us what a CEI does?

The role involves taking policy decisions for Emmaus International and Emmaus Europe (in line with the main policy areas chosen by the General Assemblies, of course!) and taking decisions on the projects to support and fund. This must be done while being mindful about the common good and not just your own group's interests. The role does not just boil down to strategic meetings; there are also lots of tangible activities if you want to get involved in visiting trial member groups (Europe is responsible for monitoring groups that do not have the oversight of a national organisation) or organising an event, for instance.

What did you enjoy most during your time in office?

This period of office enabled me to understand the concrete reality of the movement in its international dimension. However, what I liked the most was getting away from my day-to-day problems managing a community, and taking the time to consider in depth the movement's major issues. It does a lot of good!

Is the role very time-consuming?

If you only sit on the board, for EI you need to allow for a week-long in-person meeting, and three half-day online meetings per year. For EE, there are two Regional Councils per year, each lasting 2.5 days. These are in-person

meetings.

To that you can add occasional commitments (trial member visits or other trips).

The more you get involved, the more interesting the role is! The role also involves the home group making a commitment to the movement, as the group has to accept one of its members often being away. However, it is also an opportunity to have your group's situation represented at the international level, and get the latest news about the global life of the movement.

As you represent Emmaus Iasi, the group that will host the assembly in October, I want to take the chance to ask you to encourage the European groups to travel to Romania.

I am not Romanian myself, but getting to know Romania has been a fantastic experience. The Romanian people are very warm and their history is fascinating. Even though they are so close to us, they have had to face the terrible reality of the Ceausescu regime for decades, and the impact is still visible. Their modern-day reality remains very different, with a totally disengaged State and levels of corruption are still high: however, the Romanian Emmaus members energetically face this reality.

Emmaus Iasi always has new plans and the assembly will be an opportunity to see in-person all the varied projects they have undertaken, with the support of many European groups, maybe including your group (farming, outreach, weaving).

Finally, the warm Romanian welcome is not a myth, you will truly feel at home when you come to Iasi!

[Additional information :](#)

A CEI's term of office normally lasts for four years, and s/he can be re-elected once. However, at the World Assembly we voted to switch the schedules so that from the next WA in 2025 the regions will elect their representatives on the eve of the WA. Consequently, this 2023-2025 period of office will last for just two years, **making it a real opportunity to give it a go!**

Those wishing to stand for election may submit their candidacies in March at the same time as registering for the GA. However, the EE team is already available to answer your questions.



Solidarity with Ukraine:

A new social center to escape war and poverty

By Carina Aaltonen

On 6 January, companions, friends, and partners of Emaus Oselya gathered for the inauguration of the new support centre "Olesya Sanotska" in Vynykky, Lviv, Ukraine.



Before



After



Inaugural speech by Carina Aaltonen



Grigory the National Delegate of Ukraine and Natalia the Head of the Oselya Community

It almost felt like a miracle standing in front of a building with nothing but a hole in the ground, less than five months ago. Many people have made incredible efforts to build this house in the shortest time possible, with a Russian invasion and full-scale war always present. The key person in this process is the community leader of Emmaus Olesya, Natalia Sanotska, sister of Olesya Sanotska, the deceased founder of the Emaus Oselya community. Natalia ensured that every little piece in this 400 m2 building fell into place. This project is an excellent example of what happens when the Emmaus movement, a private construction company, the local council and other various NGOs, parishes and churches come together for a common goal.

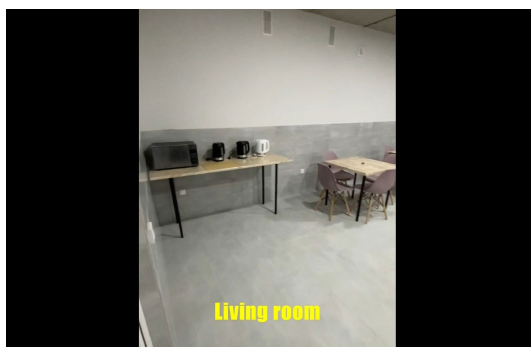
“Anyone can become homeless”, said Leonid Melnyk, managing director and owner of the Rial construction company in Lviv, in his speech at the inauguration. In just five months, he and his builders completed the support centre, despite the war and sometimes a shortage of building materials. Leonid has been in the building sector for more than 40 years, but this project was the dearest to him and where he has put his heart and soul.

There have been doubts about making such a significant investment in a country at war, but why wait? It is now they need the centre the most.

[Read more...](#)

Preview of the Social Center on our Instagram page

@emmauseurope <https://www.instagram.com/p/>



[CnHlk65s1LL/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CnHlk65s1LL/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Emmaus Europe's visit to Nasha Khata

On 5 January (the eve of Greek-Catholic Christmas), Father André, Oleksandra, Taras and Vasyl gave a very warm welcome to the Emmaus Europe delegation that had travelled to Ukraine. The visit enabled us to gain a better understanding of the activities and the issues faced by this trial member group. Split across two residential communities (Nasha Khata and Drohobych), the resilience and initiative of the group really impressed us, as did the undeniable community spirit emanating from the companions and leadership team.



Taras, responsable des compagnons devant une haie traditionnelle



Vassily le responsable de la communauté vient de rentrer du front



Nasha Khata is the community's main residential site (it means "our house" in Ukrainian). The house is located in the middle of the forest in an isolated rural location close to Drohobych. The area also houses other associations in several buildings on a former military site.

It is here that the companions look after five pigs, three cows, two calves and two horses. They also farm the land (beans, squash for the pigs, and oats for the horses) and collect walnut timber from the surrounding woods. This wood enables them to handcraft traditional fencing, sold at €10 the unit. Nasha Khata is also home to the furniture

and sofa repair workshop, employing up to seven people. The companions' skill and know-how are really impressive!

In addition to manual activities and farming, the association manages 28 clothing donation containers in the city, supplying five clothing stores in Drohobych and the surrounding small towns and villages. Unfortunately, the war and the country's overall economic situation no longer enable the group to foresee being financially self-sufficient in the next few months: they have experienced a drop in clothing donations, and decreased sofa and fencing orders. The group is receiving monthly support from the Ukraine Fund to the tune of approximately €3,500 per month. Following this first visit, we headed to Drohobych, the region's second biggest city after Lviv. In 2018, the group moved in to a building rented out by the Council for a modest sum in exchange for renovation work being done. Despite numerous warnings from their partners, and the general state of repair of this immense building, the group did not lose heart, and is gradually undertaking building work with the help of a companion and volunteers, in order to offer the best possible conditions to the region's vulnerable people and, since March 2022, internally displaced people.

Just like at Oselya, people who were living on the streets or in precarious circumstances in towns that they have had to flee have found appropriate shelter and support with the group.

The painstaking work done by the team is very impressive! As the renovation progresses, we can glimpse the real potential of these new premises, whose maximum accommodation capacity will be around 50 places once the building work has been completed.



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