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December 2022

Emmaus in Europe



emmaus

EUROPE

ACTIVISTS FOR CHANGE

Dear all,

December is always a busy month of the year at Emmaus with special sales before Christmas and extra rounds led by the companions due to the cold weather.

This year we are thinking of the Ukrainian people who, in addition to the cold weather, are dealing with power cuts and a lack of heating due to targeted Russian attacks. Thanks to the donations you collected we are striving to meet the needs outlined by the Ukrainian groups who are helping displaced persons. We will be giving you more information about this initiative later on in this newsletter.

We are also thinking of all exiled persons who are on their journeys this Christmas time, seeking a shelter and a country of welcome but who are often met with violence and rejection.

18 December was International Migrants Day and we celebrated migrants, their dignity and their rights on this day, as all the Emmaus groups do every day all across Europe.

It is with this idea of celebrating the beauty of humanity in mind that we would like to wish you a very merry Christmas and a happy new year!

The Emmaus Europe team

Emmaus stories

Zbigniew Drazkowski from Emmaus Lublin: Poland at a Historic Crossroads



Zbigniew at a meeting of the regional board of Emmaus Europe in Lublin, 20/10/2022. Credit – Emmaus Europe

The last regional board meeting was held in Poland. At the meeting we asked our host, Zbigniew Drazkowski, founder of the Emmaus Lublin group, to give us his point of view on the political situation in Poland under a far-right regime. Here is what he said, the article is quite long but it is a reflection on the history of Europe as a whole, not just Poland.

“The current situation is the result of a long process, revolutions are always the result of a long process - a revolutionary situation must exist in order for one to occur (Marx). Over the last 7 years we have been at a crossroads in Poland.

25 years after the fall of the communist system and after years of continuous economic development we are now at a crossroads. After years of rule of liberal/centrist parties, the nationalist party, which is a far-right party, came to power in 2015. This party won the elections using the slogan, ‘Poland is falling to pieces’! How did this happen? Poland, an example of amazing economic success. Poland, the leader of transformation in Eastern Europe. Poland, with its new, modern road network, with its new cities, new airports, new stadia, new

houses and new opportunities. How could the Polish people think that the slogan of ‘Poland is falling to pieces’ truly described our country? It doesn’t make sense, well, not at first...

After the fall of the communist system, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the first Polish government adopted a liberal political and economic programme. A few months earlier the opposition from the old regime had been discussing options for the development of the country, looking for a Third Way - in between communism and capitalism....But it was eventually the first Minister of Finance, Professor Leszek Balcerowicz, a liberal, who became the face of economic and social change in our country. I remember 1 January 1990 well and how it felt to wake up to a shocking new reality in Poland.

[Read more...](#)

Budget 2023: don't forget to think about the assembly of Emmaus Europe!

Whilst you are finalising your 2023 budgets here is some initial information to take into account regarding your participation at the regional assembly of Emmaus Europe. This event is organised once every 4 years and will be held from 24-27 October 2023 in Iasi, Romania!

The participation fee will be 450 euros per person (hotel and meals are included) whilst transport will cost between 100 and 300 euros depending on where you are coming from.

Registration for this event will open in March!

European action

The Emmaus groups from across Europe gather to discuss dignified welcome for exiled persons



Carina Aaltonen, Chair of Emmaus Europe, and Eve Poulteau, Chief Executive, with MEPs (from left to right) Pietro Bartolo,

Tineke Strik and Damien Carême. Credit – Emmaus Europe

On 7-8 December around 50 representatives of Emmaus groups in 12 European countries met in Brussels to learn about the best practices and the challenges of other groups on the topic of welcome for exiled persons in Europe.

Journeying along the migration routes in Europe we have seen how the Emmaus groups mobilise in different ways on this topic, from Bosnia all the way to the Netherlands. The groups provide welcome and support for the victims of violent refoulements, they provide psychological support, they integrate migrant persons within the Emmaus communities (in France over half of the companions are currently waiting to receive a residency permit) and they also

lead advocacy/awareness-raising campaigns.

On 8 December we met with 3 MEPs, one from each of the French and Dutch Green Parties and one from the Italian Democrat Party, who defend ideas similar to Emmaus' as part of the negotiations on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. They notably defend the right of migrant persons to choose the country where they would like to seek asylum. These negotiations have recently stalled due to major differences in opinion between Member States and there are, for the time being, no expectations of major decisions to be made on the Pact in the year ahead. These MEPs outlined how important it is for them in their negotiations to have organisations like Emmaus who are raising awareness amongst the general public, as well as leading grassroots initiatives, and giving people a different point of view on how we can welcome exiled persons here in Europe.

Currently the dominant discourse is that of the far-right and it is our duty, therefore, to unite to ensure that another point of view is heard, to give people more reliable statistics and to show the impact that current policies are having on human beings.

18 December was International Migrants Day

We marked this day by signing a position paper alongside other European organisations who defend the rights of migrants persons/freedom of movement.

[Position paper](#)

Spotlight on...

Emmaus Mundo: a green, open, multi-activity sales area!



Emmaus Mundo (France). Credit – Emmaus Mundo

The renovation of a sales area, a key space in any Emmaus group, may represent an opportunity to launch new projects. We met with Joël from Emmaus Mundo and Nicolas from Bâtisseurs d'Instants (Builders of Moments) and they told us all about their adventure of creating a new sales area in Alsace whilst bearing in mind the challenges our world is facing.

You recently inaugurated your sales area, but it's much more than a mere sales area, isn't it?

In order to find a sustainable solution to the challenges of tomorrow we at Emmaus Mundo decided to develop a new site in North Eurométropole, Strasbourg, with a view to widening the scope of our activities and our missions and to have a new tool to help tackle the challenges created by a society of excessive consumption which constantly produces both consumer goods and deepening exclusion.

We believed that this new site should take into account the different challenges of the ecological transition and the transition to a more solidarity-focused society. Being cramped (too cramped) on our old site (which was 1,300m²), it became essential for us to find a new site in order to simplify and fluidify the way we work and to be able to develop new projects related to the transitions our society is facing. Our cooperative and solidarity-based recycling centre recently opened (after four years of work) in Bischheim. On this 4000m²-site (on a 1-hectare plot of land), 1900m² will be dedicated to sales areas whilst we have also built workshops (for carpentry work, for fixing electric goods, a FabLab and a sewing area), as well as a conference room and a restaurant!

For the layout of the site we decided to get in touch with a scenographer to help us think about the division of the spaces, the movement of people around the site and the appeal of the areas, focusing on creating a fun atmosphere and having aesthetically-pleasing shops. The idea was to avoid making duplicates of things we already have and to opt for materials that have been reused or recycled wherever possible.

This new site is a lot bigger than your old site, what are your ambitions in terms of the development of your social initiatives in Bischheim?

This upscaling of Emmaus Mundo will help us to meet the dual challenges of the ecological and social transition alongside the need to balance our budget: we have doubled the size of our sales area, we have doubled the number of staff on re-integration schemes on our traditional activities and we have created new jobs (our objective for the next 5 years is to have 150 staff per year whilst we currently have 50 staff members). We will also be collecting more materials (the number of requests for collection continues to rise from both the general public and from companies), we will have greater sorting capacity and our aim is to reach a re-use rate of 50% (we are currently at 35%) as well as reducing the amount of ultimate waste at this site.

[Read more...](#)



Emmaus Movement solidarity

The Pedal to the Metal to Complete the Construction of Oselya's Social Centre before the Cord Season Really Kicks In



Natalia, leader of the Oselya group, opening the doors here to the future Centre for Social Support in Lviv. Credit – Emmaus

Oselya

Natalia has sent us news of the progress of the work on the new social centre in Lviv. The opening is scheduled for 6 January, to mark the celebration of Christmas in the Orthodox calendar! The construction work only started in early August but nothing is stronger than the will to help others!

Natalia: “Dear friends, first of all, I want to thank you for your incredible trust, which inspires us and stimulates us to take even greater responsibility.

And now some news of the construction project. To be honest, we ourselves did not expect that we would be able to do this despite the war, attacks, power cuts, weather conditions, etc. But our solidarity and mutual support is now bearing fruit. At the moment, we have a building covered with a roof, with plastering both outside and inside, and which has electrical and plumbing communications laid. [The construction company and all the contractors] are wonderful people and with them we have been able to ignite the fire of our project.

Therefore, we plan to complete the construction by January 1 and dream of organising a Holy Dinner for our companions and for all those involved in the project on January 6 (if there is no military force-majeure which prevents us from doing so).

In reality, the centre will be operational for visitors a little after this - on January 15-16, because it is important that we have a little time first to connect the equipment and test it.

Regarding the difficulties:

1. The lights are often turned off during construction, so the walls are not drying well and this slows down all other processes. [If we] turn on the generator, this requires additional money for fuel.
2. The facade of the house will be plastered, covered with a protective material and left until spring. The final layer of paint will be applied in the spring: if it is done now, there is a risk of poor drying (but this will not affect the work at all, only the aesthetics).
3. As for the heat pump, the components will be brought to Ukraine after the payment of a first instalment. Therefore, we are waiting for the last part of the funds to be sent across and then we will start working on this. Markings on the area where the pump will be installed have already been made. [Editor's note: the last payment, for an amount of

€45,000, was sent across on 2 December. This payment was a donation sent by Maisons du Monde to Emmaus France in order to support the populations who have been affected by the war in Ukraine].

4. We work in a mode of uncertainty, rotating between power outages, air raid alerts and difficult weather conditions.

5. It is difficult to cooperate with the city authorities on the matter of repairing the access road to the house. Because of the war, the state is cutting back its budget, but I am not losing hope and I am continuing to work on this matter.

Without your trust and support, none of this would have happened. This house will always be a symbol of our common invincibility, solidarity and friendship.

In fairytales, good always wins over evil. Isn't Emmaus a fairytale that has become reality?

Thank you very much for everything!

Best regards,

Natalia

Ukraine and Eastern Europe - the unmet needs for the winter months

Many of you have been wondering how you can help the Ukrainian people and our groups in the region to deal with the challenges that winter represents.

First of all we should outline the fact that you have already helped a lot and that we continue to use the Ukraine Fund - which is made up of donations from the Emmaus movement - every month to help cover the financial needs of the Ukrainian and Polish groups who are hosting displaced persons and refugees.

If you would like to help by sending equipment or materials to these groups then you should get in touch with Emmanuel to discuss this. We have [attached](#) the updated version of the needs in our Ukrainian groups and in our groups in neighbouring countries.

Please send equipment and materials which meet the needs of these groups on the frontline!

/! Donations of warm clothing which is in good condition are very useful for our Ukrainian groups **but they should not be sent to Romania**: the Romanian customs service deem such donations to be waste and there is a **significant** risk that such donations will be returned to the sender.



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