

SELLING ONLINE

HOW TO LAUNCH AND THEN DEVELOP THIS ACTIVITY

38 participants came to this event from different 12 European countries.

In recent years many Emmaus groups from all across Europe have started to sell objects online themselves or by joining an online sales platform, such as the French cooperative, Label Emmaus. Faced with the challenges of the health crisis, which shook up our lifestyles and methods of consumption, new groups have taken their first steps on this digital adventure which is not always easy to launch.

During this exchange we focused on how to launch online sales and how to communicate about this activity. We heard about the experiences of Emmaus Jura (Switzerland), Label Emmaus (France), Emmaus Social Foundation (Spain) as well as from all the participants.

This meeting was enlightening and allowed us to look at everything involved in this activity. The three groups who gave presentations explained how they first started selling online and outlined both the positives and negatives of the initial launch. Whilst selling online seems like a good thing in order to diversify its activity the participants also discussed the potential pitfalls.

The cooperative Label Emmaus, which unites the online stores of the French Emmaus groups, also presented its independent marketplace. We also made the most of their training course to carry on the dialogue with an experience of taking photos to sell articles online and hearing about best practices when writing the texts for selling online.

As regards this activity, everybody agreed: selling online will never replace the more human aspect of selling in our shops. Selling online is another option for us, one which has certain advantages, such as gaining in visibility, reaching out to another audience, or selling products which we could not sell in our shops at a fairer price. During the pandemic selling online was also a way of maintaining our solidarity sales. There are a lot of advantages for this activity which seems to be becoming increasingly important!



WHAT WE LEARNED FROM THESE DISCUSSIONS

■ That selling online requires significant human resources, skills (in technology, logistics, photography, etc.) and infrastructure, notably for storage and stock management between the online shop and the on-site shop

■ That uploading articles to an online platform is a lot of work (around 30 minutes per article), as is dealing with complaints. At the same time, it is essential to have a wide range of products available online. One good idea put forward to deal with this issue was to focus on upcycled products where we have significant quantities of products available. We could also sell furniture and rare products online which we have not been able to sell in our stores. Another idea was to create a brand of upcycled products as has been done in Spain. This solution also allows you to avoid the issue of managing multi-channel stock.

■ The issue of the ethics behind the tools we use to sell online was also raised in order to ensure that they are in accordance with our struggles and that we can maintain our independence online. However, it also seems important to have a presence on online platforms which have significant visibility, and such platforms are often not compatible with our values

■ Lastly, that we should ensure we limit the environmental and social impacts of these new technologies and that we should not forget about our local commitment when selling online

At Emmaüs Village Carlton bar codes are used for selling online and in the shop.