

# THE EMMAUS OF TOMORROW

## HOW CAN WE BRING ABOUT RENEWAL WITHIN OUR GROUPS?

26 participants came to this event from 8 different European countries.

In several European countries the founders of the groups will soon be taking their (well-deserved!) retirement. So how can they pass on to new leaders when their commitment to Emmaus has been one of the key commitments of their lives? If we do not plan for this handover in advance some groups may disappear as their founders leave the Emmaus movement.

Some countries have been getting organised to train and recruit future leaders and some groups have now completed this handover process.

This exchange of best practices represented an opportunity to hear from the (ex) leaders of French groups who had passed over the leadership of their groups or who were in the process of doing so – Philippe from Laval and Paul from Toulouse (previously of the Scherwiller group). Emmaus in France has been getting ready for this in different ways. Half of the communities decided to recruit somebody on the national level to work on this. The national organisation recruits and trains staff who are then deployed in one of the communities. The training course, organised with groups of around 10 recruits, lasts for four months and includes internships for individuals in several communities as well as one week of group training per month. In addition to this the recruits have 3.5 days of continuous training per year over a period of four years. The leaders recruited by the communities who are not part of the employer association can also sign up for these four years of continuous training. And all the Emmaus groups have access to a large catalogue of training courses (available from EE in French).

Duncan from Emmaus UK presented how things work in the UK. Recruitment is done locally but the national organisation has developed tools to recruit and train board members who then recruit and provide support to new additions at Emmaus. The training courses are then adapted to the needs of each group.

Several Italians participated in this meeting and Renzo from the Villafranca community talked about the importance of passing on Emmaus' values to new leaders who are simply looking for a job whereas for him the community was his life's work.

During the discussion Zbigniew from Emmaus Lublin offered to share his experience of gradually handing over to a leadership team of four people. The new leadership team gradually took responsibility for parts of the community's activities whilst he worked to transmit Emmaus' values to them.

Emmaus Europe will work with all interested groups and countries on this transition in the years to come as we are arriving at a crossroads in several countries.

*Silvana et Renzo handing over to new leaders at the Villafranca community in Italy.*



## WHAT WE LEARNED FROM THESE DISCUSSIONS

■ When group leaders are also the founders of their groups a lot of important but difficult work needs to be done to accept that the people who take over from them will not do everything exactly as they did

■ This can be particularly difficult in communities where the founders and their families have lived within the community and where their private lives are intertwined with Emmaus

■ Several proposals were made for such situations: to work together on the mission statement and to regularly update it depending on the challenges Emmaus must face in order to carry on evolving over time / inviting the founders to write down what they believe is the meaning behind a community so that this can be passed on to those who will take over from them, knowing that the new leaders may decide to do things differently / inviting the founders to note down which key things they believe need to be maintained so that it is easier to accept change on non-essential aspects

■ Lightening the load by dividing it up amongst different people (staff, volunteers, companions) if it is impossible for one

person to take responsibility for all of it

■ Accepting that there is not one unique model for an Emmaus group: inviting future leaders to visit several different European groups so they can see what different models are possible

■ Organising things together (via the national organisation if such an organisation exists in the country) in order to train new leaders when they first arrive at Emmaus and to then offer regular continuous training so they can gradually develop within the movement

■ Anticipating transition needs whenever possible by setting up a dynamic community spirit where responsibilities are shared and where there is regular renewal - by limiting, for example, the number of mandates of the Chair, or by recruiting and training volunteers and getting them involved in decision-making

■ Providing several opportunities for young people (potential new recruits) to learn about Emmaus such as internships or civic service positions

■ Do not hesitate to get in touch with Emmaus Europe on such matters!