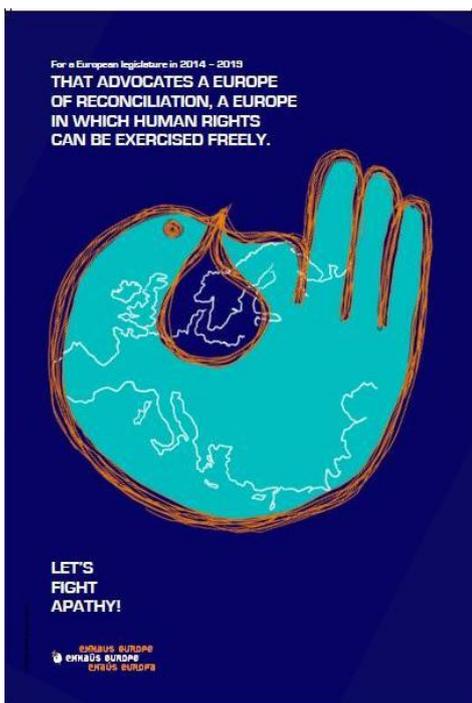


Extraordinary roundtable

Humanist Utopia in Europe

6 May 2014 – Emmaus La Poudrière, Brussels

REPORT



In spring 2014, Emmaus Europe's political lobbying work focused on the May 2014 European Parliament elections. As European legislation affects the daily lives of the residents of the EU, Emmaus Europe is keen to ensure that the new European Parliament respects the rights of everyone and particularly those of the most socially-excluded members of society. On this occasion, Emmaus Europe held a roundtable discussion on *Humanist Utopia in Europe* at Emmaus La Poudrière in Brussels on 6 May 2014. European members of the Emmaus Movement and prospective MEPs were invited to attend.



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❖ Why have a roundtable discussion?

The European Parliament elections will be held on 22-25 May 2014. The European Parliament is re-elected every five years. The Parliament plays a vital role in the sense that along with the Council of the European Union, it votes on European laws and they have a direct impact on our daily lives. Daily life in Europe is particularly marked by:

1. A decline in respect for migrants' rights.
2. The social balance being upset by the economic crisis.
3. Austerity policies with an increase in poverty and unemployment.
4. A larger swathe of society being marginalised.

Emmaus Europe has been lobbying MEPs since 2009 in order to ensure that the issues that we hold dear are part of the Parliament's debates. As a continuation of this approach, in 2014 a roundtable discussion was arranged, with prospective MEPs being invited to discuss our values and day-to-day work.

A more social and humane Europe is needed. Emmaus has chosen to take this path for the past 60 years by taking in migrants and fighting to ensure that their rights are protected and respected and via the social and solidarity economy, environmentally friendly practices and consumption, and sustainable development. These discussions help to demonstrate that *through our work, an alternative to current social values is actually possible.*

❖ The day's programme

Tuesday 6 May was split into two sessions:

- The morning was devoted to workshops for the Movement stakeholders on the issues of *Migration and trafficking, Sustainable Development and the Alternative Economy*: three working groups were formed and each one worked on the three issues. The aim was to report back on the current situation and make proposals.
- The afternoon was reserved for a discussion with the MEPs: telling them about the reality of life in the Movement, explaining our model and demonstrating that it works.

❖ Participants

Members of Emmaus in Europe:

- Julio De La Granja, President of Emmaus Europe.
- Xavier Vandromme, Emmaus Europe representative
- Margaret Tuccori, Emmaus Brighton & Hove – UK
- Jean-Pierre Galopin, Emmaus Angers - France
- Willi Does, Emmaus Cologne – Germany
- Pascale Does, Emmaus Cologne – Germany
- Michael Barnett Brecht, Emmaus Krefeld – Germany
- Jorgen Olsen, Gtu – Denmark
- Birgitte Juul Nielsen, Gtu – Denmark
- Lydia Feghloul, Friperie Solidaire – France
- Roberto Lapia, Friperie Solidaire – France
- Marja Ebbers, Emmaus Feniks – Netherlands
- Harry Suiskens, Emmaus Feniks – Netherlands

- Herbert Bitter, Emmaus Haarzuilens - Netherlands.
- Gerlof Van Reehnen, Emmaus Netherlands
- Marie-France Bedleem, Emmaus Armentières– France
- Anne Saingier, Emmaus La Halte Saint Jean - France
- Amela Effendic, International Forum of Solidarity (ISF) - Bosnia
- Gabriela Martin, Emmaus Europe coordinator
- Marie Tixier, events assistant, Emmaus Europe
- Naïs Laurandel, European commitment intern, Emmaus Europe

Prospective MEPs

- Guillaume Balas, teacher, Paris Region councillor – France, Paris Region constituency
- Antoine Varoquié, General Secretary of the French Socialist Delegation at the European Parliament – France, Paris Region constituency
- Dominique Riquet, represented by her parliamentary assistant – MEP – France, North-West constituency
- Marc Tarabella, represented by his parliamentary assistant – MEP - Belgium

❖ Workshops



Migration and human trafficking

Observations

- The groups' situations are worsening and living conditions in the groups are difficult.
- Administrative procedures for regularizing the immigration status of undocumented migrants and asylum seekers change all the time. How can rights be truly respected against this backdrop?
- An unattractive topic for society and politicians.

Proposals

- Set up zones in major European cities where the Emmaus migrant shelter and support model can be trialled (also valid for the social and solidarity economy).
- Internally appoint a migration contact person for each Emmaus country in Europe: the person's role would be to activate the networks and provide basic technical support

in the event of a regional administrative or legislative difficulty.

- Create shared Emmaus Europe indicators: shelter and support, diversity, the strength of our social values.
- Train stakeholders, particularly in the detention centres.
- Network based working

- Call on the European authorities to put in place unrestricted travel visas.
- Continue the lobbying work; demonstrate to society and politicians that our model is viable.

The social and solidarity economy – Sustainable development

Observations

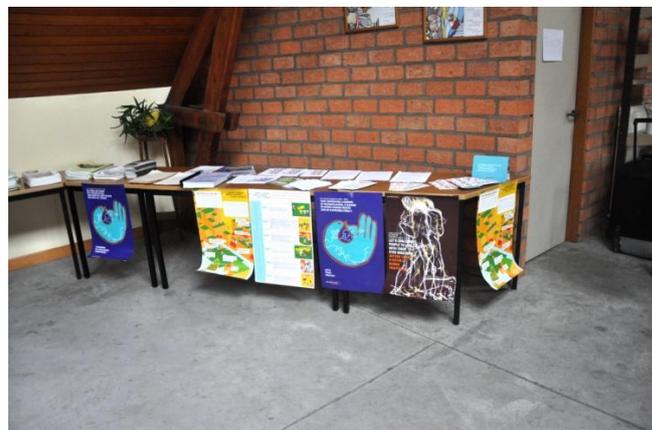
- The social and solidarity economy is an alternative to the current economic model: Emmaus recognizes the fundamental principles of this model: it is based on identified needs and uses economic resources with the aim of serving the general good.
- This economy enables us to go beyond the concept of productivity and to create activity for everyone and social value.
- Solidarity economy activities at Emmaus are closely linked to the environment (reuse and collection of unwanted goods): this makes for an enhanced environmental impact and helps

to socially include people who are experiencing difficulties.

- Emmaus is a major stakeholder in sustainable development
- The companions received being in great pain, are disconnected from the issue of the environment. How to raise awareness on this issue in a difficult daily survival?

Proposals

- With regard to the European Parliament, lobby in order to encourage European legislation on the social and solidarity economy to be created, work on the concept of production in order to transform production modes (moving towards solidarity-based and environmentally-friendly production modes).
- Focus more on the concept of 'activity' and less on 'work: Emmaus and its model help to produce wellbeing rather than material production. The concept of 'activity' helps put human beings back at the heart of things.
- Showcase the Emmaus model, be proud of it and champion it.



❖ The debate

European members of the Emmaus Movement and prospective MEPs discussed the issues for nearly two hours. The President of Emmaus Europe, Julio De La Granja, introduced the discussion. An excerpt from his speech:

“The Emmaus Movement can offer an economic, social and environmental alternative (...) Being successful in this fight will also involve lobbying both politicians and civil society (...) Emmaus Europe is calling for true upwards harmonisation of European migration standards, true solidarity between States when receiving and distributing refugees. Emmaus Europe denounces the exorbitant cost of EU border surveillance and the human rights violations caused by this surveillance (...) In 2014, 60 years after Abbé Pierre’s famous appeal, it is still vital that we take action. Political issues should not hold sway over respect for human rights in Europe. Determined people continue to fight to break down the wall of selfishness and once again bring alive solidarity in society’s conscience.”



A transcribed summary of the main points from the discussion

- Varoquié and Balas praised the way that civil society lobbies elected representatives and has an influence on the European Parliament debates. The EU is at a crucial moment in its history. The crisis has caused inequality to explode. It has not given rise to solidarity but has aroused fear, has caused people to withdraw from society and has increased nationalism. These European Parliament elections are important as they are a chance to renew the Parliament. To change the EU, more democracy is needed, hence the importance of the next Commission President being from the new parliamentary majority and being answerable to it.

Solutions need to be found quickly. It is time to reaffirm human rights and reaffirm the fact that they hold sway over economic rights.

A new development model based on energy transition is needed, a new form of corporate governance, economic circuits, with everyone getting involved in all of these aspects. Emmaus was praised for its pioneering role in this area.

The social and solidarity economy and sustainable development

- Lydia Feghloul: It is important that the social and solidarity economy is recognised by the law. However, the social and solidarity economy is difficult to define. It is the manifestation of citizen initiatives that address local needs and situations.
- The candidates stressed that social policy remains the responsibility of the Member States. The EU can coordinate on certain issues and make recommendations. However, there is no European social policy in the true sense of

the term, and that is a problem. The Council of the European Union repeatedly blocks the social legislation that the Parliament wants to put in place. The priority is therefore to find a way of harmonising social policy at European level, exploiting the existing niches to create EU social competence.

- Varoquié and Balas championed the creation of a European minimum wage and a European work inspectorate.

They believe that the social and solidarity economy most definitely has its place. The problem is that all the countries do not have the same approach to it and some believe it to be the responsibility of the public services. The social and solidarity economy should not replace the State and neither should it act as a 'smokescreen' for some companies. The European Parliament can protect Emmaus's solidarity economy work in Europe in its legislation but should not regulate it as the social and solidarity economy cannot be defined at the present time using common criteria.

The prospective MEPs advocated greater EU investment in combating poverty by the European Investment Bank, through the budget and through taxation of financial transactions. The economic activity of the future must be based on energy transition in order to create sustainable and responsible employment. We must move away from a traditional high productivity economy.

Migration policies

- Balas: The cost of Frontex continues to rise while the results are disastrous. It is unrealistic to want to turn Europe into a fortress. Real European migration policy is needed.
- Riquet: A global approach to migration policy is needed, setting quotas and deepening the dialogue with the relevant third countries. It is necessary to maintain a budget for European border security because it enables the region to combat threats such as terrorism and all forms of trafficking. The defence budget should be reduced in order to increase the security budget.

Anne Saingier: Where is the Europe of human beings?

- Riquet: Mobility is a positive facet of the Europe of human beings.
- Balas: Europe must be shifted towards the sections of society that believe it is not for them. The Europe of human beings is a Europe that respects the general good. The measure of the general good is commitment.

❖ Acknowledgements

Thanks to Emmaus La Poudrière for hosting the meeting, the President Julio de la Granja, Xavier Vandromme whom led the discussion all day long, the Movement's stakeholders for their involvement and work, the MEPs who attended, for the interest they have shown in our association and values, and thanks to Pierre and Linda, the two interpreters.

This meeting has shown that migration policy, the social and solidarity economy and sustainable development are still challenges to be met in the future. Let's continue championing our values and let us join together in greater numbers to jointly develop initiatives and share a model based on peace and solidarity.