



We need to invent a new

ECONOMIC ALTERNATIVES

tam-tam: the Emmaus news wall

“An automated economy puts people out of work, we know that. But we also know that you can't turn back the clock. We need to invent a new society; humanity's goal should be to live, not just to produce.”

Abbé Pierre



Emmaus on the move

Financial capitalism, banks, stock exchanges, shareholders, G20... So many words associated with the dominant economic system which has proved to be a failure in recent years, as the “financial crisis” has revealed. At Emmaus, in contrast, we have always pursued an economy at the service of people and driven by solidarity, as opposed to a system which exacerbates the gulf between those who have a great deal and those who have nothing. Here is a snapshot of Emmaus practices.

In Lebanon, the Professional Mutual-Aid Association (known by its French acronym, AEP) has been calling for the right to economic initiative since 1984, in other words access to credit for all, even those who are often relegated to the margins of society. The AEP advises and supports people from the stage of planning an economic initiative through to its successful implementation, all the while introducing them to the formal system of savings and loans. These initiatives result in the increasing self-sufficiency of their beneficiaries, such as Amale who, thanks to the loan that he was granted, was able to purchase a machine to clean old carpets. As for Tony, he bought five dairy cows and then invested in a small, family-run milk production business.

Ethical and enjoyable

Emmaus groups do not set out to make profit or accumulate capital; which does not mean that they do not need to make



a minimum of profit in order to ensure the financial stability and sustainability of their enterprises. Running an income-generating activity in order to achieve self-sufficiency is actually a founding value of the Emmaus Movement. This was the goal of the Florence Home Foundation (FHF) in India in developing their eco-tourism programme. The organisation manages several children's homes and organic farms and also offers tourists the chance to stay there. What is the advantage of this? Visitors are immersed in the local context and discover the organisation's ac-



A “green” economy

Another economic alternative is based on respecting the interaction between humans and their environment and promoting sustainable development. The Ateliers du Bocage organisation, founded in 1991 in France, focuses on reintegrating people in difficult circumstances through employment in highly specialised

recycling activities. A pilot initiative was set up last March in Burkina Faso involving the collection and recycling of mobile phones containing substances that are harmful to people's health and the environment.

Renewable energy is a major focus for Emmaus Vie in Madagascar where manual water pumps and wind turbines are designed and produced by the companions from this community. They are trained to manufacture and then install them all over the island, including in remote areas where communities would otherwise have no access to clean water.

Emmaus ethical finance

The Emmaus Ethical Fund was set up in 2007 to pool the financial reserves of the Emmaus groups in order to boost the creation and development of social economy initiatives and companies. All the Emmaus groups can participate in this collective programme, which has been developed with Banca Etica – one of the top international ethical banks. Find out more in the “All aboard” section of this *tam-tam*.

Driven by democratic principles that break with the pursuit of profit approach, these few examples demonstrate that the Emmaus groups have long been looking to the future and coming up with effective alternative solutions with the potential to inspire and lay the foundations for “another economy”.

Editorial

The Voice of the Social and Cooperative Economy by Jean Rousseau, President of Emmaus International

There is no need to reiterate the terrible consequences of the financial crisis for the most vulnerable populations worldwide. The ultra-liberal system in which we live must itself already be considered as a failure if we evaluate it in terms of reducing poverty and inequality, giving access to human rights and preserving natural resources. Declarations about regulating the system have been no more than a flash

in the pan and, in any case, they do not even involve the poorest countries in seeking solutions and ways out of this crisis. At the end of the day, it has been countries with fragile economies that have been punished rather than the banks. Amongst the devastation of this landscape, the social and cooperative economy is only just starting to make its voice heard, whether it be

in public policies which have managed to steer clear of the speculation frenzy or in local initiatives where the creation of wealth is linked to social objectives focussed on tackling poverty. In this respect, in addition to its pioneering role, the Emmaus Movement must continue to scout out new possibilities opened up by its activities, now recognised for their innovative and effective nature.



All aboard

→ Help to create and develop social and cooperative enterprises and activities by contributing to the Emmaus Ethical Fund. This is made up of voluntary deposits made by Emmaus organisations for a period of between two and five years. It is a financial reserve which is used to guarantee loans granted by Banca Etica to Emmaus groups or organisations outside the Movement which share the same values after consultation with Emmaus International. Even groups with limited resources can contribute, even if they only deposit 10,000 CFA francs, 1000 rupees or 100 pesos.

→ Why not apply to the Emmaus Ethical Fund if you want to develop new activities? Send your loan application to the Emmaus International Executive Committee, specifying the purpose of the loan, the expected results, the amount requested and the repayment schedule. Your application will be studied in consultation with the Emmaus region concerned and then passed on to Banca Etica if it is approved.

→ The deposit forms and loan application forms for the Emmaus Ethical Fund are available from the International Secretariat of Emmaus (from Guillaume Charron, g.charron@emmaus-international.org) or from the Emmaus International website.

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Next port of call... Doboj Istok (Bosnia-Herzegovina)

Developing income-generating activities in order to be self-sufficient is crucial for the International Forum of Solidarity - Emmaus (IFS-Emmaus), as Dženana Šabić (Assistant Director for International Relations) explains:

A few words about the IFS-Emmaus The IFS-Emmaus was founded in 1999 in Gračanica, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, to take care of refugees returning to Bosnia after the war. Today we have offices in Doboj Istok, Sarajevo, Tuzla and Srebrenica. Our activities are very diverse: running shelters and reception centres for people who are homeless, elderly and helpless; developing income-generating activities; providing assistance to victims of human trafficking; tackling drug addiction; and preventing child pornography and paedophilia. We organise youth camps in Srebrenica every year in July for young people and volunteers who come from all over Europe to help us with our initiatives to give proper assistance to the local population in need.

Why did you apply to the Emmaus Ethical Fund? Some 400 people live in the ‘Duje’ reception centre in Doboj Istok. Their needs must be met and we have to find ways to finance ourselves. Hence, some years ago, we started producing agricultural and dairy products. Most of what is produced is for internal consumption and the rest is sold to generate income. We applied for a loan of 257,000 euros from the Emmaus Ethical Fund to buy the equipment required to process milk and make dairy products. The loan has also allowed us to buy vehicles to transport the dairy products for sale. The



increase in our production capacity has led to an increase in what we earn and therefore an improvement in the quality of the services that we provide to the beneficiaries of the centre.

What are the pros and cons? The application process seems to me to be a bit time-consuming, in particular for small Emmaus groups, but it is easier to obtain a loan through the Emmaus Ethical Fund. The interest rate is the same as that with commercial banks but what really made up our minds was that we know where our money is going. Banca Etica's investments and funding are socially and environmentally responsible and ethical. This is a very interesting approach because the interest that we pay on our loan is used to develop other worthy projects. I would recommend it to other Emmaus groups; it is our duty to make such a ‘political’ decision and to choose our investments with care.