

## **Power went to the South at Emmaus**

*Emilie Motte, volunteer translator at the GtU, has translated this link <https://globalnyt.dk/content/magten-drog-sydpaa-hos-emmaus> into English from Danish*

Emmaus International elected the 56-year-old Beninese Patrick Atohoun as president to succeed the French Jean Rousseau at its General Assembly from 18 to 23 April in Jesolo, Italy. Benin is in West Africa.

Patrick Atohoun is a biologist, economist and planner, and has made large use of these three educations as leader of the Emmaus organization in Pahou, which is located between Benin's largest city, Cotonou, and the history's most important point of embarkation of slaves, Ouidah.

Moreover, Atohoun is also the leader of the project for water supply and sanitation in the Lake Nokoué area – *to know more* [http://www.emmaus-international.org/images/site/menu/qui-sommes-nous/emmaus-monde/europe/danemark/GTU/docs\\_EN/Water\\_all\\_around.pdf](http://www.emmaus-international.org/images/site/menu/qui-sommes-nous/emmaus-monde/europe/danemark/GTU/docs_EN/Water_all_around.pdf)

Atohoun sees himself as a student of Isidore de Souza, who both introduced Emmaus in Benin and played an essential role in the democratization of the country – *to know more* [http://www.emmaus-international.org/images/site/menu/qui-sommes-nous/emmaus-monde/europe/danemark/GTU/docs\\_EN/My\\_African\\_Idol.pdf](http://www.emmaus-international.org/images/site/menu/qui-sommes-nous/emmaus-monde/europe/danemark/GTU/docs_EN/My_African_Idol.pdf)

As the new president of Emmaus International, Atohoun has to give most of his other responsibilities to other people – experience has proved that the president can only devote 25 percent of his time to his country and spends the rest going to the meetings of the bodies of the movement and to visit some of the 338 member organizations.

Patrick Atohoun has been elected unopposed, and is the first non-European president of the movement since its creation in 1949 by the French Henri Grouès, better known as Abbé Pierre.

The Manifesto and the statutes were introduced in 1969 and 1971 and to date, one Swiss, one Dutch, two Italians and one French have succeeded each other at the head of the organization.

The movement tries to help the poorest people by asking each member organization and each project to meet two requirements: to create income generating activities to reinforce independence, and to build public support in every single neighborhood.

### **People were surprised**

The president is part of an executive Committee composed of eight members, who are elected by and among a 25 members Board of Directors, which is composed of the president and representatives: four Asians, five Africans, four Americans and twelve Europeans.

For several years, tradition has been that the Board of Directors chose five Europeans and one representative from each of the other regions to form the executive Committee. The 400 people at the General Assembly were surprised when the names of the members of the executive Committee were announced:

1. Vice-President Juan Melquiades, Peru.

2. Vice-President Moon Sharma, India.

Secretary Koné Nanteque, Ivory Coast.

Treasurer Héléne Sayad, Lebanon.

Among the members without any specific function, there are two Europeans: Paul Matthews from Great Britain and Hans van Beek who lives in France but was born in the Netherlands. The third member of the executive Committee without any specific function for the next four years is Gloria Zuluaga from Columbia.

The composition of the Board of Directors and the executive Committee has to be seen in the light of the existence of seven member organizations in Asia, fifteen in Africa, thirty in America (two in the United States and twenty-eight in South America), and the 286 others are in Europe. Out of the approximately 35.000 people regularly working in the movement, more than the half are French.

At least one international network is still ahead of Emmaus when it comes to influencing the southern organizations, since ActionAid secretariat is located in Johannesburg in South Africa. Emmaus International, Emmaus Europe and Emmaus France share the same building in Montreuil, an eastern suburb of Paris, and they will probably stay there for a long time.

The Danish Julien Kalimira Mzee Murhula and Jørgen Olsen took part in Emmaus International General Assembly – *here is a link to an article in Danish written after the European Regional Assembly in Manchester which elected Julien for the training council of Emmaus International and Jørgen for the political council of EI*

<https://globalnyt.dk/content/danskere-paa-udvalgsposter-i-emmaus-netvaerk>

The final declaration of the General Assembly and other information are available on

<http://www.emmaus-international.org/en/>