



TOGETHER, MORE THAN EVER,
LET'S FIGHT TO CHANGE THE WORLD!

SUMMARY OF THE DEBATES: MEMBERSHIP AND SELF- SUFFICIENCY



Abbé Pierre realised early on that financial autonomy would be essential to ensure independence.

Today, one of the main strengths of the Emmaus movement is its capacity to generate its own resources from its work, without depending on external funding. It is thanks to the daily work of the Emmaus groups in the different countries where we work that the movement is able to tackle the causes of poverty freely and independently. This self-sufficiency is a great strength of the Emmaus movement that underpins its political and financial independence.

The Board members who met in Santiago (Chile) in 2006 drew up a list of specifications for what self-sufficiency looks like overall:

- Economic self-sufficiency through financial independence;
- Human self-sufficiency due to the groups' ability to make their own decisions;
- Political self-sufficiency through groups' freedom to choose their positions with regard to local, national and international issues.

I. WHY AND HOW WAS THIS DOCUMENT DRAWN UP?

The Emmaus movement continues to grow, from 344 groups in 2011 to over 419 member groups in 2021. This is an increase of 22% over the last 10 years. However, we have noticed that self-sufficiency is often not taken into account as a condition for acceptance of new groups. What do we think of this principle 25 years after the adoption of the Principles and Membership Charter? How do groups embody self-sufficiency today? How is this principle communicated to, and understood by, new groups? What are the stakes for the movement in the future if this condition for membership is no longer respected?

The Board members wanted to question the meaning of self-sufficiency again as a criterion for membership of Emmaus by offering preparatory debates to all the groups worldwide before the World Assembly. Building on what our founding texts have laid down over the course of our history, their aim was to take stock of the gaps between our principles and our practices, and to produce initial ideas on how to reduce these discrepancies.

II. WHICH WORLD ASSEMBLY DEBATE DOES THIS REFER TO?

This document relates to the World Assembly debates on our ability to EXIST and COMMIT to STRENGTHEN OUR MOVEMENT.





Two subjects will be debated in Uruguay:

- The future of our economic models for combatting poverty
- Self-sufficiency, its meaning for our movement, from its origins and for the future

III. PRESENTATION OF THE DOCUMENT

This document is the summary of the 17 preparatory debates, with the participation of over 137 of the movement's groups

Observations

Broadly accepted points of agreement:

- A group should have income-generating activities, the capacity to use their own resources, and be moving towards economic self-sufficiency in order to be part of the movement. This is part of the Emmaus identity.
- For most groups self-sufficiency is a multi-dimensional concept: economic, political and democratic self-sufficiency. This is a fundamental value of our model to combat poverty.
- Some even argue that political self-sufficiency takes precedence over economic self-sufficiency and that, in some contexts, it is up to the movement to secure the economic self-sufficiency of groups in the poorest contexts, to enable them to carry out their struggles. Indeed, autonomy is essential faced by states that implement unsustainable policies. Strengthening self-sufficiency helps to combat injustice and ensure that we have a political impact.
 - Self-sufficiency is not only economic, but also a democratic challenge: one form of self-sufficiency means enabling actors of civil society and local populations to speak out and make decisions.
- The issue of self-sufficiency is closely linked to the issues of work and dignity, and it should go hand in hand with solidarity.
- This fundamental principle must be understood in a multi-dimensional way, and adapted to contexts and realities, taking into account existing asymmetries.
- Self-sufficiency must support the groups' social project, allowing them to be autonomous in order to demonstrate alternatives to exclusion.
- Solidarity is a means of supporting groups to become self-sufficient in all its dimensions: economic, political and democratic.

Points of consideration:

- There are gaps as too many groups depend on external funding; yet self-sufficiency makes it possible to be financially and politically independent. For many groups, it is a concept that is almost non-existent.
- The movement pays less and less attention to the principle of self-sufficiency for the new groups accepted into the movement. This goes hand in hand with the question of funding, some of which is highly questionable: banks, companies or the state. Money is a means of asserting pressure; we must exercise caution when accepting public or private money.
 - What groups are we accepting into the movement and how?



- Self-sufficiency as a criterion for membership: is this a criterion we need to review?
- Economic self-sufficiency takes on a different reality depending on the context and legal form of the groups.
- Emmaus should fight for public resources to be used for just social policies. How can we maintain consistency in our political struggles if we receive public aid?
- The capitalist system leads us to limit this question to its economic dimension; However, it can also be a question of food and energy self-sufficiency which allows the group to live independently, as well as restoring each person's self-esteem. In this respect, we recover and sell objects, clothes, but we can also produce and sell fruit and vegetables or keep them for the group's own needs, etc.
- Gap between European groups and other groups in the world that do not generate enough resources to build up reserves.

Points of difference:

- Self-sufficiency/External private or public funding:

For some, the fact that they receive public subsidies to finance social actions is not seen as a problem, as it is up to Emmaus to advocate for public policies that are geared towards the most vulnerable.

For others, autonomy is not compatible with external funding, especially appeals for donations. However, a distinction must be made between emergency aid (in the case of a health crisis) and regular aid. On the other hand, even in times of crisis, external funding must be analysed, reflected upon and distributed collectively. Hybrid models can work if they still serve the movement.

The self-sufficiency of the movement can be jeopardised both by the more fragile groups and by groups that develop new responses to exclusion with state support.

Some groups are really questioning the Emmaus identity: do groups that are increasingly dependent on external contributions (whatever they may be) really want to keep the same identity?
- Self-sufficiency of each group/self-sufficiency of the movement:

For some, it is the responsibility of the movement to ensure the self-sufficiency of all groups through solidarity. Recognising the asymmetries of the groups' contexts and situations and striving for the autonomy of the movement: if the movement is self-sufficient, it can support the struggles of the groups, even those of the most fragile, and the joint actions.

In the face of new challenges, new responses must be invented to combat exclusion (e.g., integration structures, online sales, etc.). However, it is important to remember that the new responses must not call into question our fundamental values (e.g., how can we welcome and support the most excluded in facilities or actions that are limited in time and partly financed by the state?).

Ways to bridge the gap between values and practices

- Developing ecological self-sufficiency
 - Strengthen economic activities that are environmentally friendly: recycling water or making compost for agriculture, using clean energy
 - Finding a balance between the number of people we take in and our work capacity; our objective is not to grow financially.
- We also need to look for new forms of work and spend less, live with less.



- Analysing what makes us dependent, such as the standards that are imposed on collection and recycling activities.
Organising a discussion on public aid, what it can do for us but also its limits for a movement like Emmaus.
- Working with others, building alliances
- Communicating more strongly on the social impact of our work, to raise awareness and increase our resources
- Developing international solidarity to meet this objective
To help groups that have a social project but are not self-sufficient in developing or maintaining their economic activities, and to rely on solidarity to accompany them towards self-sufficiency.
 - Need to better analyse the economic activities of the groups, as well as their organisational mode which favours, to varying degrees, the autonomy of each individual
 - Greater focus on groups applying for membership
 - National organisations should play an important role in selecting and supporting new groups.
 - Strengthen the follow-up of the more fragile groups and support new groups to become involved in the life of the movement.
- Countering the asymmetry of economic situations, or the risks incurred in several countries where our groups are present:
 - Seek collective responses to redistribute wealth and exchange practices; find common solutions to redistribute wealth and opportunities.
 - Guarantee the self-sufficiency of the movement in its functioning, its political choices and the actions that result from them
- Reaffirming this principle, which is a political principle, not just an economic one, that makes up our identity. This principle goes hand in hand with the principle of transparency
 - Develop training activities
 - Develop advocacy work to gain recognition for who we are and what we want to have the right to live
 - Adapt the definition of self-sufficiency to current changes and challenges: strengthen political independence, taking into account contexts of risk/lack of political freedom of action. Integrating the ecological dimension into our concept of self-sufficiency.