



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

## DEBATE SUMMARY: SOLIDARITY AND SHARING



From the very beginning of the movement, solidarity has been a fundamental element: "Come help me to help others." Sharing helps to give meaning to our lives and aims to support people in extreme poverty who, together with others, are taking action to change their circumstances.

Acting in solidarity means being able to share what is most essential.

At Emmaus, solidarity is both a fundamental value and a way to transform society. Solidarity is at the heart of the "Principles and Membership Charter of Emmaus International". In 2016, 10 years after the death of Abbé Pierre, the Emmaus groups came together for the World Assembly in Jesolo, Italy, and committed to providing fresh impetus to our international solidarity in order to fight poverty.

### I. WHY AND HOW WAS THIS DOCUMENT DRAWN UP?

Over the past four years, our solidarity actions have made it possible for us to support many groups' activities and struggles, to get involved in international campaigns, to organise a World Forum of Alternatives led by the most excluded, to run major joint initiatives, and yet the momentum of the groups at Jesolo has not really produced the results we had hoped for.

The Emmaus International Board has made the following observations:

- ✓ On average, only one out of two groups holds an annual solidarity sale;
- ✓ Solidarity funds are set up at each level of the movement (national, regional, international), and a lack of consultation can lead to misunderstandings between groups or competition between these funds;
- ✓ Our means of support for groups are asymmetrical based on their location;
- ✓ There is little understanding of our solidarity as a driving force for social transformation.

The global health crisis further widened these gaps between our values and our practices. Support for our groups and for the most excluded populations has not been approached in a collective manner. There has been an increase in those turning inward and not sharing.

The Board members wanted to re-examine the meaning of international solidarity at Emmaus, by proposing preparatory debates to all groups around the world, on the following topic: sharing that goes beyond solidarity.





## II. WHICH WORLD ASSEMBLY DEBATE DOES THIS REFER TO?

This document is linked to the World Assembly debates related to our ability to RESIST to TACKLE THE CAUSES OF POVERTY

Two subjects will be debated in Uruguay:

- Making Emmaus' voices heard on acting and speaking out together
- Being an actor of our solidarity at Emmaus

## 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

Most of the participants agree with the values reiterated by the members of the Board: they advocate for collective solidarity, pooling resources which, in addition to financing projects, makes it possible to support important political struggles. Everyone reiterates that this should be a **shared sentiment to seek to bring about social transformation.**

On the one hand, there are participants who note a loss of meaning in terms of values, a lack of knowledge of the movement and, as a result, a lack of investment in international solidarity, and on the other hand, there are people for whom solidarity is omnipresent and represents a pillar of the group's work.

It was also mentioned that solidarity is not experienced in the same way depending on the region in which you live. In some countries of the world, sharing is needed for survival, in others, only the surplus is shared.

The groups are aware, however, of **the asymmetry between groups that have access to local/national solidarity and those who can only rely on the solidarity of the international movement.**

The reasons given for the lack of sharing are:

- From the groups' perspective: **priority is given to local solidarity**; they have difficulty getting involved at international level. Some groups nevertheless express the need to move beyond this local vision of solidarity.
- With regard to Emmaus International: participants often mention **a lack of information and communication** (communication channels and format). While EI gives meaning to certain values through constantly evolving work (e.g., migration), there is a real **problem of passing this on within the groups.**
- Solidarity is often perceived only as **financial support**, while for other groups solidarity is a **means of fighting injustice**, which requires sharing our experiences, knowledge and skills, and goes further than making financial contributions.



- Some feel that it is always the same groups that benefit from international solidarity, as in Europe where geographical solidarity collectives have not evolved for a very long time and they help the same groups.

**The debates made us realise that there is a lack of mobilisation strategy in the groups and the movement in general:** what role do the elected members play, at what level should we help between the national, European and international levels, what information and training do trial groups require from the national organisations on the issue of international solidarity.

When we talked about solidarity during the pandemic, a small number of groups or national organisations defended the view that you must save yourself before saving others, rather than saving yourself by helping others. We must work together to prevent this kind of stance from being taken. But there is a lack of opportunities for discussing international solidarity.

It is important to work on economic solidarity, which was particularly weakened during the pandemic, but we must not forget that there are other forms of solidarity: human, knowledge, political, etc.

## Proposals

**Participants were unanimous in recommending:**

- **Organising more meetings**, encouraging spaces for equal exchanges between groups, **breaking down North/South thinking**; organising meetings between regions;
- A need for **more frequent and better links with Emmaus International Secretariat/the international level**, less wordy and more accessible communication for companions<sup>1</sup>;
- Huge need for **training on international solidarity** to encourage involvement and understanding: to use existing spaces in the national and regional organisations and other spaces for gatherings, and to create new initiatives
- Appoint an international contact person in the groups;
- **More group visits**;
- **Better flow of information within the groups**, for all members of the group.

**Most participants mentioned ways to better link political advocacy and international solidarity, which would create more joint efforts for sharing:**

- Working on **converging group struggles** in different contexts can stimulate a sense of belonging and commitment to solidarity: moving from being 'activists for change' to being '**multipliers of solidarity**';
- Better **use of our alliances** and promotion of the struggles that we lead with others;
- Calling on regional and national organisations to promote understanding of solidarity and propose collective responses

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<sup>1</sup> Lack of information or information overload?



- Our international solidarity must **support the struggles of local groups** who do not have freedom of speech
- Working on **developing global pooling of resources within the movement**;
- Strengthening existing practices (solidarity sale, 'salons', work camps, etc.);
- **Politicising the social activities** of groups;
- **Enhancing non-financial solidarity** (political campaigns, manual labour, material assistance, etc.).

**A few more specific ideas were mentioned separately:**

- Setting up an international committee that would go to groups out of touch with international solidarity initiatives to better explain the meaning of this solidarity, its usefulness, etc.;
- Emmaus International could create a unifying initiative in France for international solidarity;
- The annual solidarity sales could be made compulsory in the texts;
- Those with more resources could organise several annual sales per year;
- The ecological aspect of solidarity could be strengthened;
- Strengthen the role of regional organisations in identifying the groups' needs;
- Launch a survey to find out why some groups do not participate in international solidarity.