



Our small gesture, our

REGIONAL SALONS

tam-tam: the Emmaus news wall

“Doing small things (...) is never pointless. Our small gesture, our small action is worth more than a big, beautiful dream that never comes true. It’s by taking action that we’ll make a difference. (...) That is true solidarity.” Abbé Pierre



Emmaus on the move

Emmaus groups have been joining forces for several years now to stage a new kind of event - “regional salons”. Also known as “collective sales” or “big second-hand fairs”, several groups get together and sell all kinds of items to raise funds for solidarity activities. Let’s find out more about these initiatives...

When Emmaus groups decide to run a salon together, the International Secretariat of Emmaus (ISE) may take part in preparatory meetings and suggest they financially support one of the six priority action areas chosen by the Emmaus International World Assembly in 2012: access to water, education and healthcare, fighting people trafficking, freedom of movement and ethical finance. This gives groups the chance to get involved in the Movement at international level. “Alongside voluntary contributions made by Emmaus groups, salons are the action areas’ only source of financing” says Thomas Bodelet, programmes officer at the ISE. Last year, some of the proceeds of a big sale in Rouen, France were used to promote access to education. This enabled the group Kudumbam in India to develop its five learning centres, which open every evening to 125 children between the ages of 12 and 17. They learn maths, science and English. As for the Salon in Turin, Italy, the choice naturally fell on access to water. “We chose to support the Nokoué project because we’ve been following it closely since the start and because it follows on from what we do at national level - for many years now we’ve been actively working in Italy for public water management”, explains Franco Monnicchi,



Vice-Chair of Emmaus Italy. In 2011, proceeds of the Turin salon went towards initiatives run by a local organisation in Italy to help trafficking victims.

Aside from the financial side of things, regional salons are a way of making Emmaus known, being part of an international

Movement and campaigning. That’s why debates about freedom of movement were held for the Nice and Elbeuf salons in France, in order to raise awareness outside Emmaus.

Forging ties between groups and mobilising

Salons are intended to build solidarity, but they’re also about having a good time. At the salon in the French region of Bourgogne Franche-Comté, there was “a real desire to give impetus to the region and liven it up with a new joint project”, explains Daniel Simon, a volunteer at the Emmaus Besançon community. By working side by side, salons also bring groups from the same region together. For the communities involved, it’s a way of taking a step back from their daily routines and reaching out to others. “It gives companions, volunteers and leaders a chance to get to know each other as they don’t always have the opportunity or the time” says Morgan Bauchy, deputy companion at the Nice community in France and member of the Nice Salon organising committee. “Companions and volunteers who take part in the salon see that their work is useful to others and that with very little we can hold large-scale events”, says Franco.

Catching on elsewhere...

Groups interested in giving it a go should, says Daniel, remember the importance of “calling on other regions’ experiences to find out about the dos and don’ts so as to gain a lot of time.” That’s what the Africa region is doing as it is considering holding a salon. The idea would be to put on a “fair where Emmaus groups’ products and activities would be on show, to discuss the Emmaus Movement around the world, especially in Africa, and sell second-hand items from Emmaus groups from the North.” As for European groups, a salon would help African groups get to know each other and raise Emmaus’s profile in Africa.

A fresh idea by Jean Rousseau, President of Emmaus International

The idea of “salons” in our movement came up in 2000 after an Emmaus International General Assembly, held on Emmaus’s 50th anniversary. The strong need for personal contacts and sharing, which came to light at the assembly, gave rise to the Paris salon, the 14th of which is taking place this year. Soon after, it was decided the event would

be developed to pool resources for international solidarity. Groups were so enthusiastic about the initiative they wondered whether it could be staged again, and in what other ways - that’s how various other events sprang up in the form of “regional salons” and “special decentralised sales”. These initiatives help bring us together, bolster our Movement’s solidarity and raise the

funds needed for our action on the ground and political action that we have wanted to increase for ten years now. Our Movement stands out for its pragmatism, but we’re not always very well known about and don’t always mobilise enough. These joint solidarity initiatives are a powerful way of changing this. Regional salons are in fact a new idea!



All aboard

→ All the Emmaus groups, no matter what region they’re in, can pool their resources and organise a salon in support of Emmaus International’s priority action areas. The International Secretariat of Emmaus is here to help you, for example by organising a debate beforehand, or raising awareness amongst the public or the community on a specific issue.

→ In October 2010 Emmaus France compiled Emmaus groups’ experiences of holding regional salons and other big sales. This resource may be used as a practical guide and is available in French by request: communication@emmaus-france.org

→ Regional salons in support of Emmaus International planned for 2013: Chalons sur Saône (France): 12th April, Lille (France): 13th and 14th April, Paris (France): 16th June, Amnéville (France): 15th September, Les Herbiers (France): 10th November, Tours (auction - France): 23rd November

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Next port of call... Geneva (Switzerland)

In October 2012 the Emmaus Geneva community in Switzerland held its first regional salon alongside five other Emmaus communities. Lisette Wuthier has been a volunteer at the community for many years and is in charge of event organising. She looks back at their successful first experience...



What motivated you to organise a regional salon? At a meeting of the Swiss Federation of Emmaus Communities, the community leaders decided to organise a salon to work together on a joint event and raise funds in support of three projects - for access to water and sanitation on Lake Nokoué in Benin, to support two Emmaus communities in Ukraine and to open a new community in Switzerland. The idea was to bring the companions from the different communities together as part of joint initiative.

How did you go about planning the event? We set up a committee, made up of leaders and volunteers, myself included. There was a lot of paperwork to do such as sending invitations out to customers, public figures, volunteers and donors, contacting retailers for the raffle prizes, writing thank you letters after the salon... We publicised the event in the local papers and on TV, and handed out 10 000 flyers in and around Geneva.

How did it go? We started setting up the stalls at 6:30am on the day. The doors opened at 10:30am but people had been

waiting outside for over an hour! The communities all helped liven up the event with a second-hand fashion show, auction run by Alain Morisod (a popular singer in Switzerland), raffle and games for children... the lively atmosphere and meetings between companions, visitors and curious customers were motivating and rewarding and made us want to carry on working together. The companions really got involved in the salon and played the game. Some were delighted to go down the catwalk; others worked on the stands with smiling faces. The salon brought us together and we’re all looking forward to meeting up again.

What tips do you have for organising this kind of event? For the next salon, which we’re currently working on, we’re going to set up the day before because unforeseen events can always arise. You also need to make sure you set special items aside all year long, contact retailers well in advance so they can save quality items for the raffle and also organise the official opening.