



Interview with Alberto Gastón and Amaia Ibarondo, representatives of Emmaus Social Foundation

1. Why is the Emmaus Foundation involved in an observatory on the fair distribution of wealth?

Emmaus Social Foundation is a social and non-profit organisation that aims to promote and support individual and collective transformation processes in the social, economic and environmental fields.

Emmaus develops social and workplace inclusion programmes, awareness-raising, communication and advocacy strategies, solidarity-based economy initiatives and education for social change processes. At the heart of all these activities is the improvement of the quality of life and empowerment of people who are at risk or at serious risk of exclusion.

Emmaus' involvement in the Observatory is through the Education for Social Transformation and Communication (ESTC) area. Emmaus' extensive experience in developing processes based on education for social change and its ongoing collaboration with various university stakeholders within the framework of the solidarity economy has naturally led to participation and collaboration in areas where the diversity of stakeholders highlights, questions and attempts to address the systemic elements that underlie people's social exclusion, one of which is the unequal distribution of wealth.

2. Why is the accumulation of wealth and the resulting inequality a problem?

The neoliberal and patriarchal system, as well as the current international economic order, are unsustainable both socially and environmentally and not because they are globalised and prevailing they should be considered immovable and natural. That is why we believe that transformative approaches and actions should be chosen that do not promote structural poverty and increasing inequality, but rather contribute to its eradication.

Social exclusion, poverty and inequality, the consequences of the accumulation of wealth and the unequal distribution of wealth, constitute the most important, serious, urgent and difficult problem that societies must face. The proportion of people and social groups affected by social exclusion is enormous, indeed the majority, and exclusion, far from diminishing, is increasing. This concept, which is variable, requires a certain diagnosis of its generating processes and its determining causes. Only on such bases can we succeed in formulating innovative long-term policies, programmes and strategies that effectively

contribute to tackling the problem and to generating effective dynamics of inclusion through sustainable human development processes.

3. What are the proposed solutions?

At Emmaus, we promote the solidarity economy as a vision and practice that claims the economy as a means and not as an end, at the service of personal and community development, as a tool that contributes to improving the quality of life of people and our social environment, based on respect for the natural environment with ecological sustainability parameters.

This perspective makes the solidarity economy a fundamentally transformative practice, given that it confronts the conventional model of economic activity in our world, granting people, their needs, capacities and work a value above capital and its accumulation, while at the same time demanding a more redistributive and equitable socio-economic model.

Furthermore, we believe that questioning and denouncing the current socio-economic model also means questioning the organisational and decision-making models that are formed to carry out economic initiatives. It is not only the types of economic initiatives or organisational forms that need to be transformed but, above all, the forms of relationship, the values; in short, it is a question of questioning visible and invisible power relations.

As Emmaus Social Foundation is an entity that generates solidarity economy initiatives and participates in the different networks in this field of action, we see the need to promote the solidarity economy both from the conceptual and practical point of view. To this end, we will promote all forms of solidarity economy by fostering business alternatives for social inclusion, focusing on promoting local productive experiences.

On the other hand, from the area of ESTC and in the framework of education for social transformation, starting from the analysis and the denunciation of the causes of current injustices and inequities, we focus on the search, construction and promotion of alternatives through the creation of tools and methodologies of participation, dynamization and management of social entities, as well as initiatives of Solidarity Economy; facilitating spaces for exchange, learning and the search for synergies for groups and individuals committed to social transformation with a gender perspective and promoting social inclusion and environmental sustainability; advocacy with local public administrations to promote integral local development, responsible public procurement (ethical, green and social) and public policies based on Solidarity Economy proposals.

All this work is based on a questioning of the needs and differentiated realities of men and women, insisting on the valuation and visibility of the roles and contributions of women, individually and collectively, in all spheres of life, including the conservation, creation and promotion of alternatives.