

Visit to Ibanesti from the 11th to the 14th of April 2008

Friday the 11th of April

President Frans Ronnes, Vice-president Karl Grammanitsch, Helma van Drunen and Sandra Hengl arrive at Cluj airport around lunch time. The mayor of Ibanesti Vasile Dan, his wife Ingrid, translator Andrea and a mini bus and driver are awaiting us. We drive through Cluj-Napoca in an easterly direction. Lots of traffic and road signs in remembrance of the revolution. The journey takes approx. 3 hours – cars become less and horses and carts more. We see gypsies on the roadsides, lots of Romanian and European flags on the houses. The roads go from bad to worse. We pass sheep and shepherds, goats and an occasional cow. See people working the land by hand and horses ploughing the fields. After our arrival we are shown a traditional house with women working at traditional needlework and on a loom. Dinner is served to us in Prince Dimitrie Sturdza's chalet. The prince is a personal friend of the mayor of Ibanesti but was not present during our visit.

Saturday the 12th of April

First a visit to the town hall, followed by a visit to a so-called "whirl pool", a means of washing clothes. Part of a natural stream is diverted, flows over a wooden tub, in which the scrubbed textiles rotate due to the force of the water and are then hung on the fences to dry. Right next door the men are distilling "Tuica", strong and traditional - medicine. In the hunting museum in Gurghiu there are bears, wolves, lynxes and wild cats, all of which still live around here! After a stroll through a natural park, a part of a school for forestry, we visit the local school. Children are there to greet us and others are working on their school magazine, in their spare time. Wood pellets and a beer brewery follow. The reporter of a local television station records an interview and is most interested in the Charter. In the evening, in the community centre in Ibanesti, the president and Helma present the Charter to the village people. This is followed by performances of folk groups. The Vice-mayor from the county council is there also. He welcomes the incentive of the mayor of Ibanesti to join the Charter and promises to be of assistance and to give his support. The formal consent of the ministry of external affairs is all that is still outstanding.

Sunday the 13th of April

The day begins with mass in the Greek Orthodox Church, an experience for us. As we leave the service after one and a half hours we receive bread and candles from four different families. This is traditionally done in remembrance of their deceased. After lunch we visit Lapusna village. Twenty kilometres in one and a half hours, by car! Our mobile phones have long ceased to find any signal. A village consisting of a church and a monastery with three inhabitants is our next stop. After visiting a trout farm we make ourselves comfortable in beautiful buildings once used by Caecescu. Charter matters are discussed and preparations for the future made. Several members of our group are fortunate enough to see a beautiful wild bear. For those hunters reading this, one with 600 points?!! Small presents are exchanged and we thank everyone for the wonderful hospitality we have received here. Ibanesti will be welcome to the Charter.

Written by: Sandra Hengl - Lassee (AUSTRIA)