

A TRIP TO ROMANIA

On Sunday 13th April I travelled with Greg Blezard from Greenstandards (<http://www.greenstandards.tv>), to Bucharest. An early flight at 6.30 am meant that by 12 o'clock local we were on our way to Brasov, a city of some 300,000 in the Transilvanian Mountains. We travelled with Daniel Hristea for some three hours in fine weather to our accommodation in Sarcele on the outskirts of Brasov where we met up with Trevor Davies, who had already been doing education work further north in the country in Cluj.

Daniel took us to the FAST centre. This building had been constructed by Daniel and many volunteers from all over the world to enable to help in the education of Romany children living in the area. As you can imagine both Greg and I were quite exhausted by this time, but we did manage a sojourn into Brasov with Trevor, Daniel, and his wife Ema.

On the first morning we met several head teachers at the Teacher centre in Brasov. A very warm morning, windows wide open, but the heating could not be turned down! The purpose of this meeting led by Trevor was to consider and reflect on the future development of education in the community with the following needs in mind:

Local needs; European needs; Global needs. Priorities would be established about school development and improvement with the curriculum; teaching and learning; management and administration. Then Greg asked each person present how Greenstandards could help each school.

In the afternoon we visited the Romany settlement in the village of Tarlungeni. This was quite a shock for me. The houses were wooden shacks, the children playing in disgusting conditions by the side of a contaminated river. This left an indelible memory in my mind and in my heart.

In the evening Daniel accompanied us to Brasov to meet the members of the Rotary Club. A very palatial hotel, where we expected at least a meal. The Club were having a meeting after which we joined with them and introduced ourselves. This Club will be monitoring our work in the area. We did not have a meal at the hotel, but found an Italian restaurant instead!

The morning of the Tuesday took us to the Town Hall in Sarcele where we were met by the Mayor, Vasile Lata, who postponed his appointments until he had seen us. According to Daniel, this was a very important meeting.

We then visited schools in Sarcele, Zizin, and Brasov, and the travelling to all of them was an adventure in itself. We met with some of the teachers whom we had met on our first morning.

Wednesday morning we visited the charity set up by Romany's to make decorations from local forests and sell to customers in Holland. However, they were let down by unscrupulous people, but that is another story. We did have some problems reaching the school in Tarlungeni, as a major civil exercise was taking place involving all the emergency services. A large dam was near the village, the exercise asking questions about the dam being either damaged or destroyed, and what would happen to the community.

The school in Tarlungeni which Adrian and Trevor had visited before had been rebuilt after heavy rain had caused considerable damage whilst the school was being re-roofed. Somehow the very enterprising Head teacher managed to have an extra floor built! Next to the school was the Kindergarten, which had been built by volunteers, but still had to be completed.

Each school was asked for a "shopping list" of items that they were desperately in need of. These lists ranged from computers, digital cameras, scanners, desks, chairs, pencils, pens, paper; in fact everything required to run a classroom. With Greg's help we hope that all of their needs will be met. The children in all of the schools need education to be given a chance in life.

We will be arranging for the delivery of "School in a Box" within the next few months. This will be supervised by Daniel and his colleagues at the Fast Charity in Sarcele. With the monies raised here in Brackley we will be purchasing 12 Skills Boxes from the Rotary Club of Grantham. These will enable schools and communities to teach carpentry, building, and tailoring or seamstress skills.

All three of us returned home on the Thursday thoroughly exhausted, but determined to see the project through. My thanks to Greg for his expertise and commitment, and to Trevor for his vision and leadership. We all hope to return to Romania later this year to see the first lorry being unloaded.

From this brief report you can visualise how much our help is needed. My thanks to all who have helped us on our way

David Connolly
International Chairman