



Newsletter 54

March 2019

Charter of European Rural Communities

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Dear friends,

2020 has started and how! In the beginning of January, I travelled to Desborough. During a Town Twinning Pub Quiz, we formalised the Mayors' Meeting's decision to continue Desborough's membership of the Charter, even now the UK has formally left the European Union. I'm happy to conclude that the Charter spirit is still very vibrant in Desborough! But there's more news regarding member communities!

In January, the secretary and I have visited Svoge in Bulgaria. They are very enthusiastic about joining our network. The same goes for Ljutomer in Slovenia. We visited them in February and were accompanied by friends from Tisno, who have connections with this Slovenian town already. Further in this newsletter, you'll find more information about the upcoming procedure.

This year, LYCEUM will continue its second year. In May, Cashel will organise the third youth meeting of the project (the invitation has been sent a couple of weeks ago) and after the annual meeting in Bienvenida, Ockelbo will host the closing conference in September since they are the project owners. Of course, the reFORM project will kick-off in 2020 as well. To organise everything regarding this new project for adults, the project team, secretary and myself met in Nagycenk a couple of weeks ago. We're delighted to inform you about the travel cost reimbursement and make you aware of the first meeting in Esch in May (the invitation has been sent as well). In July, the annual meeting takes place in Bienvenida and they've informed us that preparations are on track! Please make sure you send the delegation lists for all meeting in time, so the organisers can find suitable host families for all of you.

Last but not least, I would like to congratulate Ibanesti for making the first steps towards the establishment of a Friends of Europe Association and please pay attention to the YCT vacancies!

Yes, 2020 promises to be a great Charter year!

Boy Scholtze
President
Charter of European Rural Communities



2. Project REFORM

Project REFORM is our project for adults for the years 2020 and 2021. The project aims are to decrease the level of Euroscepticism at the local level, strengthen democratic engagement, encourage volunteering, and help in building the future European society.



During these two years participants will gain knowledge on the EU institutions and benefits, shared values, history and our cultures.

REFORM meetings will take place in:

1. The Netherlands – ESCH 20-24.05.2020
4 participants from 10 Partners (IT, IE, RO, AT, CY, SI, DK, SE, PT, LU) + 20 local participants
To this meeting we have also invited guests from potential new member municipalities.
2. Spain – BIENVENIDA 09-13.07.2020
4 participants from 27 Partners + 50 local participants
3. Croatia – TISNO 24-27.09.2020
4 participants from 10 Partners (UK, GE, LV, GR, SK, HU, EE, CZ, ES, SI) + 20 local participants
4. Latvia – KANDAVA 06-09.05.2021
4 participants from 9 Partners (BE, FR, NL, FI, MT, BG, PL, HR, LT) 20 local participants
5. Romania – IBANESTI 15-19.07.2021
4 participants from 27 Partners + 50 local participants
6. Hungary – NAGYCENK 23-27.09.2021
2 participants from 27 Partners + 30 local participants

The budget for the meetings has also been decided at a recent project meeting in Nagycenk.

3. Update from members

Desborough, UK

In January, on the eve of Brexit, president Boy Scholtze travelled to our UK partner, Desborough to sign a partnership agreement. At last year's mayors' meeting it was decided that Desborough could remain a member of the Charter if Britain left the EU. The agreement is between the Charter and Town Twinning Desborough and was signed by the president and mr. Ben Murphy Ryan. Thanks to this agreement we will continue to see our friends from Desborough!



Ibanesti, Romania

Ibanesti has reached a new milestone! Earlier this year, they established a Friends of Europe association! Our Charter's 2d vice president Zsuzsanna Lukasc, travelled to Romania to celebrate this event with them.



In circa half of all our member municipalities are Friends of Europe associations or foundations. But what are Friends of Europe (FoE) association and what do they do? FoE's consists of enthusiastic members (mostly inhabitants) of a Charter member municipality. They help with organising Charter meetings (if there is one in their own municipality), they (help with) selecting participants to travel to Charter meetings. And they play a vital part in keeping up the Charter spirit in the municipalities. FoE's can therefor easen the Charter workload for municipalities greatly. Without them, the responsibility for Charter related activities lies with the municipalities. We wish Friends of Europe Ibanesti much success in the future!

Update potential new members

In the previous newsletter we announced that the municipalityiesof Slivo Pole (Bulgaria) and Moravce (Slovenia) were no longer members of our Charter. For Slivo Pole, this was the result of continued failed contact wiht them. For Moravce, it was the decision of the new council and mayor to end all European connections, including our Charter. We put out the call for new members from these countries and we think we were successful!

A big, big thank you to mr. Kurt Ringen and the Jovic family, for putting us in touch with the municipalities of Svoge (Bulgaria) and Ljutomer (Slovenia), respectively. Earlier this year, the president and secretary travelled to these municipalities and introduce the Charter. On the

Ljutomer visit we were joined by Marko Jovic who made the introductions with the mayor and acted as translator. The visits also gave us the opportunity to see the beauty and potential of these municipalities as Charter members.

Svoge is located in west Bulgaria, about an hour from Sofia airport. It is a place that is reminiscent of the Ardeche in France, with beautiful hills and lovely villages scattered in a valley. During our stay we visited an old monastery and one of the largest chocolate factories in the world! Ever eaten an oreo cookie? Or a milka chocolate bar? Chances are it was produced in Svoge. Unfortunately, we cannot share any photos of our visit to the chocolate factory with you as it is not allowed to photograph inside the factory (trade secrets and all), but believe me when I say it was glorious.



Ljutomer is a municipality in the north east of Slovenia, not that far from the Hungarian and the Austrian border. It's about a 2.5 hour drive from Vienna airport. It has a touch of the divine, because it looks spectacular, but also... one of the villages of the municipality is called Jerusalem! It is a beautiful little village, or hamlet to be precise of about 30 inhabitants. Ljutomer is known for its great wine (it's basically one big vineyard), and eco tourism. We very nearly missed our plane, because we didn't want to go back to our grey and rainy country. In Ljutomer, we visited a spa and glamping grounds. For anyone unfamiliar with glamping; it's camping but in style. We also visited a pottery and of course, the church and wine shop in Jerusalem.



We are very happy to say that both visits went well and the municipalities are eager to know more about the Charter. We have therefore invited 2 people from both Ljutomer and Svoge to the meeting in Esch in May. So they can see with their own eyes what the Charter is all about. After they have seen the Charter in action, they can officially ask to join the Charter and their membership will be voted on by the mayors at the annual summer meeting in Bienvenida. The president and secretary hope to see the mayors of both municipalities there. With their accession the Charter would be complete again!

4. Upcoming meetings

Invitations to the meetings in Esch, Cashel and Bienvenida have been sent. The deadlines for returning the delegation lists for the first two meetings are drawing near. For Esch it is 15 March and for Cashel it is 17 March.



5. YCT vacancies

NEW YCT MEMBERS NEEDED!

With the departure of two out of four current Youth Co-ordination Team (YCT) members later this year, the Charter of European Rural Communities is looking for two candidates who would fill the spots once they become vacant. The application process has begun with the open call announced on the Charter's official website and Facebook pages.



WHAT IS YCT?

The Youth Co-ordination Team (YCT) is the body within the Charter that presides over all the activities aimed at youngsters, and it is also in charge of all the connected administrative work. The YCT members help prepare the meetings and the workshops, generate meeting agendas and project timelines, and identify milestones. The team can consist of at least two to at most four members aged 18 to 30. Members are elected to office by the Presidium for a term of two years with the possibility of re-election.

Corona virus update:

We understand there might be some concerns over the coronavirus. The presidium keeps in close touch with the host municipalities about national updates and regulations on how to handle the coronavirus. As of now, there is no need to alter any plans and cancel meetings. We will keep you updated.