



Romanian wastewater experts visit Austria

In September 2003, 11 Romanian experts from the local environment authorities and polluting industries in the Upper Tisza region and the Mures Basin visited Austria. They participated in a nine-days' study tour on Austrian wastewater management and water monitoring. The programme was sponsored by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs and organised by Vienna based Zinke Environment Consulting in response to a request by Apele Romane, the Romanian Waters National Administration.

The study tour started with a presentation of the modern wastewater collection, treatment and cleaning system at the industrial paper and cellulose plant SAPPI near Graz. This was followed by lectures on sustainable waste management and technology at the University of Mining located in Leoben (Montanuniversität Leoben). The Romanian experts were then taken to the Paulisturz landfill for municipal and industrial waste, where they got a hands-on introduction to the new standards in landfill technologies and site remediation that allow better prevention of groundwater pollution. They were impressed to find out that at the Paulisturz landfill, all salt compounds can be eliminated from the collected leachate via "reverse osmosis" and 80% of the cleaned water can be released into the mountain creek.

The visit to the Erzberg open cast mine – the next stop on their study tour - was for the Romanians a completely new experience. This impressive abandoned mine has become an international tourist attraction, with huge trucks driving visitors up and down the pyramid mountain. The group was taken on a tour of the former underground mines, which have been turned into a geology and mining museum. The experts learned that the leaking mine water poses no heavy metal problem due to its high pH level, which is very different from the rocks in the Romanian Maramures mountains characterised by a high acidity level.

Other highlights of the study tour included visits to the Boehler steel plant and the Leoben wastewater treatment plant as well as presentations at the Technical Environment Control of the province of Styria and the chemical laboratories of the Austrian environment agency in Vienna.

The programme also included presentations given by Wolfgang Stalzer of the Austrian Ministry for Water Management, Herwig Schuster of Greenpeace and Mihaela Popovici of the ICPDR Secretariat. The visit was wrapped up with an evaluation of the programme, which clearly showed that the participants were satisfied and that they were taking a lot of new ideas back to their home country.

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www.unileoben.ac.at/engl/welcome_en.html,
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