

*Epistle of 23rd Central European Gathering of Friends in Radenci, Slovenia, April 12 to 16, 2019*

As part of Friends' outreach CEG agreed to meet in Slovenia this year with the organizational help of Jasmine Piercy and Alexander Gorbenko who found the suitable accommodation for us in the Radenci Youth Hostel.

We were blessed with the presence of 48 Friends including 15 children and one dog. Participants came from Austria, Belarus, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, the Ukraine and the UK. We were delighted with the welcome we received from Friends from Slovenia who came to be acquainted with Friends' practice and also had the opportunity to meet with us on their home territory.

The theme running throughout the weekend was our concern for animals. It was the first wholly vegan/vegetarian CEG, and also the first with a fully planned children's programme prepared by Dejan Tovilovic, which also used the theme of animals and veganism – they prepared a wonderful salad for us.

Friends from the different countries reported on the lives of their meetings, including the Czech meeting's involvement in commemoration of the Kindertransport.

On Saturday morning we developed and exchanged questions about Quakerism in small groups. The afternoon, both on Saturday and Sunday, was very active with the possibility to enjoy the famous Radenci spa, walk by the river Mura and visit the zoo. Later afternoon on Saturday was the first Business Meeting in which we discussed nominations. In the evening we shared personal stories and sang songs about animals.

Throughout there was music and singing to start and end each day.

On Sunday Jalka gave us a report about her participation at QUNO New York. Michael Eccles spoke to us about EMES and also gave us a message from Julia Ryberg who was unable to attend our meeting as she has done for the last years.

Before lunch several local people joined us for a session using clay, when we were able to produce anything we felt inspired to, based on the animal theme, with photos to help us. Children and adults worked intensively and it continued even into the afternoon.

Our second Business Meeting took place on Sunday afternoon. We talked about the need to store information in accessible and well managed internet spaces. We briefly spoke about the ongoing situation of migrants and agreed to put it on the agenda of a future preparatory meeting. We decided on the venue for the next CEG (Bratislava) and the autumn preparatory meeting (Brno).

After the last supper we enjoyed the presentation of the children's epistle and their creative work.

We have appreciated the opportunity of fellowship and spiritual refreshment at our gathering in Radenci and look forward to meeting together again in May 2020.

Jalka, Kasia and Liz