

Prince Charles opens rural training center in Transylvania

Britain's Prince Charles has opened a training center in rural Transylvania encourage conservation, farming and sustainable development in Romania

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Britain's Prince Charles is accompanied by Aura Woodward, the executive director of The Prince of Wales Foundation in the Transylvanian village of Viscri, Romania, Wednesday, June 1, 2016, during the opening of a training center to encourage conservation, farming and sustainable development in Romania. Charles, who has long been enamored of Romania's rural traditions, opened the "The Prince of Wales's Training Centre", which will bring skills and knowledge to rural communities.(AP Photo/Andreea Alexandru) ROMANIA OUT THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

By OLIMPIU GHEORGHIU, Associated Press

VISCRI, Romania (AP) — Britain's Prince Charles has opened a training center in rural Transylvania to encourage conservation, farming and sustainable development in Romania.

Charles, who has long been enamored of Romania's rural traditions, on Wednesday opened "The Prince of Wales's Training Centre," an 18th-century converted barn in the UNESCO-protected village of Viscri, where geese and cows wander down the main street. He said the center will foster skills among rural communities and help increase employment.

More than 150 people this year will "benefit from free training in heritage preservation, farming, traditional fabrics and how to start a business in the countryside, which is always, of course, an enormous challenge," the prince said.

The prince toured the center, which is painted a traditional hyacinth blue, in the village 250 kilometers (156 miles) northwest of Bucharest, speaking to local women who were stitching traditional embroidery designs on white cheesecloth.

"I felt excited ... but because he is natural and knows how to be pleasant with people... words began to flow and it was very easy to discuss with him," said seamstress Ana Negru. "He empathized with us ... he asked us whether we sew every day and whether we enjoy traditional stitching."

Apart from training rural Romanians, the center will host other events and charities. The barn was converted into a lecture room and a cafe with funding from Raiffeissen Bank.

Charles, a regular visitor to Romania, arrived in Bucharest on Monday and discussed Romania's cultural heritage, sustainable rural development and traditional architecture with President Klaus Iohannis and Prime Minister Dacian Ciolos.

Charles, who first visited Romania in 1998, owns two properties in the central region of Transylvania. A year ago, he launched The Prince of Wales Foundation Romania, a charity that supports the East European nation's heritage and rural life.

Alison Mutler in Bucharest, Romania contributed to this report.

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