A day for relaxing… Or not!

The contestants spent the day visiting Cluj-Napoca and the former salt mine in Turda, in Cluj county. We set off around 8 o'clock in the morning right after breakfast. Everyone was excited and even if the pressure of the contest could still be felt, the contestants tried to forget about it for a day and enjoy the sights we visited.

When we got to the salt mine we were split into three groups, each led by a guide. The guide showed us around the galleries and explained how salt used to be extracted. In the second part of the visit we could take a ride by boat on the salted lake or on a huge wheel (similar to the Eye of London) from where we could admire the wonders carved into the salt walls. Everyone seemed to be impressed and took a lot of photos.

The trip then continued in the historical centre of Cluj-Napoca where we visited Unirii Square and Mathias Corvinus statue, Saint Michael's church and Avram Iancu Square. As a last stop we chose Iulius Mall where we had a late lunch (mostly at McDonald's and KFC) and from where the contestants could buy souvenirs.

We got back to Bistriţa at around 9 o'clock in the evening just in time for the contestants to get a rest for the second day of the competition.

We can conclude that the trip was a successful one and despite some incidents everything went well and most of us had fun.
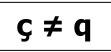
Don't forget to check the photos!

A little task

On our way back from the trip, the Albanian team launched two challenges first for one of the editors, and then for everyone who would like to solve them (except the Greeks who already know them).

The first one is a thinking task: given 9 teams, each with 10 aspirins, each aspirin having 10 grams and one team with 10 aspirins of 9 grams each, find the "9 gram" team using the scale only once.

Then, they wanted us to pronounce two different words in Albanian ("çiçi" and "çiqi") which for them had different pronunciation but for everyone else the words sounded exactly the same. Therefore, for **The quote of the day** we have the Albanian Theory:

$$ç \neq q$$

Important faces

Mihai Pătraşcu

- President of the BOI 2011 Scientific Committee
- Senior Member of Technical Staff at AT&T Labs – Research
- Obtained a PhD (2008) and B.S (2006) from MIT.
- Part of the Scientific Committee for BOI 2004, IOI 2009, and IOI 2010
- Member in the Scientific Committee of International Olympiad in Informatics

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Interview with Mihai Pătraşcu

What do you think about the way the tasks were approached on the first day of the competition and the way they were solved?

Personally, I know the solutions of the tasks, but the students have tried a lot of interesting things…some of these solutions worked, others did not. Mostly they didn't…. Students always try more than the scientific committee expects, we are a little surprised by the solutions they find eventually

Interesting…. From your vast experience gained throughout time by participating to a lot of international competitions in informatics, can you think of an *unusual situation?*

Every competition is an unusual experience, for the simple reason that is held in a completely different country

Yes, that's true. But a different experience, something peculiar that doesn't occur every day. Something that shocked you? Or surprised you.

There was a Balkan Olympiad back in 1998 that Romania boycotted because of political reasons; in fact, a lot of countries did the same. And there the ranking was completely unexpected, countries which usually don't get medals took only gold and silver because there was no one else to get them. Actually, it was the last time they received any medals…

That's interesting; I don't know how many of them knew this. What can you tell us about your role and activity in international Olympiads, as a member of different scientific committees?

At present I am a member of the International Olympiad. It is

interesting. This year it will be held in Thailand. I have already attended the preparation meeting there. Fortunately the local committee is very active, at least in their country, and they handle all the organizational problems, we are the group of elderly advisors who give their opinions on different things. Here it's much more difficult since we are both the local and the advisors committee…and it's a lot of work.

Yes, but technically you have more freedom here.

Yes, we can do what we want. The only risk is for things to go wrong…

Do you have any advice for the contest tomorrow, or in general for students?

They should be calm, read all the questions through carefully. Even if they don't know how to solve the whole task, they can

HOW TO DETECT A GEEK

Wednesday, July 6th

The 19th Balkan Olympiad in Informatics
and
The 5th Junior Balkan Olympiad in Informatics

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get a lot of points by solving different particular smaller cases which are explained in the task. And that will happen tomorrow too. If you read the task through and think about it, you can get many points. It is even enough to get the bronze medal, if you do this consistently in all tasks. He who panics that he doesn't know to solve the task and doesn't even try with partial points doesn't get the bronze medal.

But if they want to get beyond partial points, do they risk to have 0? This happens in informatics. You want to get more and you end up with nothing.

Sometimes, if you find the wrong solution. I have always been of the opinion that you either solve an easy task that gets you less points or you choose the more complicated one but you risk to receive 0 points because it is more difficult and you don't have time to test it. As you know, this resembles to a lot of things in life, you have to plan you strategy beforehand. It's not like a linear function, if they work 10 more minutes, they will get 3 extra points. You have to plan your strategy.

The real computer definitions

Hardware: Parts of the system that you can kick.

Peripherals: Components that are incompatible with your system.

Backup: An operation that's never done on time.

Memory: The part of the computerized system that is insufficient.

File: That part of the system that cannot be found.

It is a bit freaky with this wireless technology

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