



REGIONAL REPORT

Libraries for All

- European Strategy for Multicultural Education

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1. Prologue to the project “Libraries for all” in Municipal Library in Prague

Prague is both the capital city as well as a central region in the Czech Republic. With 1,170,188 inhabitants and approximately 141,800 migrants, Prague has become the region with the largest number of registered migrants. The main group of migrants is made up of people at a productive age between 20 and 39 years old, and statistically, the number of men outnumbers women 3 to 2. Compared to the rest of Europe, the Czech Republic has a relatively short history of modern migration. Although prior to the First World War many nationalities lived in the country, the post-war period and 40 years under communism have made the population considerably homogenous. However, with the establishment of democracy in the 1990s, many refugees, mostly from war torn areas, have increasingly sought the Czech Republic as a migration destination. Since 2000 and especially since 2004, the Czech Republic has become a country where labor migration prevails. Predominantly, this migrant population consists of first generation of immigrants who have come from Slovakia (17%), Vietnam (14%), the Ukraine (13%), Russia (6%), and Poland (5%). Although presently the current economic crisis has affected a large number of migrants working in the Czech Republic and has reduced their further influx, work/employment and education continue to be the major impetus for the growing presence of migrants.

In Prague, as well as in other parts of the Czech Republic, public libraries are rather unpopular among migrants. The reason is not only related to the lower number of books and media in foreign languages and the lack of foreign-oriented services at the library, but also in living conditions of migrants who spend most of their time at work. In their leisure time, they mainly socialize with other members of the expatriate community and library services do not always meet the migrants' needs. It is predominantly the children of migrants who visit public libraries; especially children who are already familiar with the Czech language and have become acquainted with the library system through their school. However, the whole migrant community has become a new target group for public libraries, which have begun to realise the need for further development and reforms in their approach both to their existing and potential readers. One of the leading ideas behind all this is the idea of public libraries functioning as community centers open to all social groups. In March 2010, this vision was presented by Multicultural Center Prague (MKC Prague) and Municipal Library in Prague (MLP) at a national library conference in Prague. The international project “Libraries for All” was also introduced at this conference together with all its innovative ideas concerning new programs and services for migrants both in the Czech Republic and in the partner countries.

2. Project objectives

The project “Libraries for All” continues after the success of our two previous projects that have been implemented within local libraries in the Czech Republic between 2002 and 2006¹. The aim of the project is to open public libraries to migrants living in Prague through the adaptation of current library services, and the implementation of new service offers corresponding to the needs of migrants in the Czech Republic². Within this project, public libraries are to become a local educational centre for members of both the majority community as well as for minorities and to promote better coexistence within the whole community. The project, however, is not focused only on migrants; one of the aims is the education of librarians and accustoming them to their new multicultural library environment.

3. Project realisation

The project has been realised in two phases. At the preliminary stage, it was necessary to select a library-partner for the project. As of spring 2009, the Municipal Library in Prague has become the official partner of the project. This library has the largest network of branches in Prague and has already collaborated on various projects with the Multicultural Center in Prague. Following the selection, general websites for the project were created: firstly, www.librariesforall.eu, a general project website; secondly, www.mlp.cz/libraries the project website specifically for the Municipal Library in Prague; and finally, promotional materials for both the international and local project level were also arranged. During a two month investigation following its formation in June 2009 at the library, the Advisory Board for Multiculturalism identified the needs of migrants living in Prague and investigated their possible interests in the library. The investigation was succeeded by the creation of new services for migrants. During the preparatory phase, a lot of new activities were planned and were discussed with members of the Advisory Board, with non-profit organisations working with migrants (children, youngsters, adults), with librarians of the Municipal Library of Prague, as well as with other libraries in the Czech Republic that provide services for migrants. Local media, minorities' information channels and organisations working with migrants in Prague were informed about the project.

¹ Projects: Libraries as Gateways to the Integration of Immigrants in the EU (2005-2006) and Diversity in Libraries (2002-2004) (<http://www.mkc.cz/en/libraries-for-all.html>).

² In the frame of the project needs of migrants living in the Czech Republic and especially in Prague were assessed (Needs Assessment in the Czech Republic) (<http://www.librariesforall.eu/en/products>).

The second phase of the project started in October 2009. The library has prepared information materials translated into 7 different languages, a basic computer course for migrants, and two Infopoints in the central library and in the Opatov branch library. Starting January 2010 the library has also offered low-threshold courses in the Czech language for foreigners and in September 2010 the library has housed an exhibition of migrant artists living in Prague titled "My home". Furthermore, the library has held a one-day training seminar for librarians in October 2009 and two successive workshops for workers of the Municipal Library of Prague.

The Multicultural Center in Prague (MKC) has been the main coordinator of these activities within the local project, the main advisory body for the questions of migration, integration of migrants and multicultural education. The aim of the Multicultural Center in Prague is to carry out the pilot project in the library, to support communication between libraries, non-profit organisations and minority associations in Prague. Following the end of the project, such activities will continue to develop in response to changing conditions.

The Municipal Library of Prague is the public universal library in Prague, including a central library, 43 affiliates and 3 mobile libraries. The branches are arranged into six local units. The Central Library and 35 branches use an automated librarian system. Thus, it functions as a regional library for the capital of Prague and its mission is to acquire, process, maintain and provide information, literature and other cultural values for the residents therein. It provides services to the widest public within a reasonable scope and quality, at a cheap rate, quickly and effectively.

4. Advisory Board

In June 2009, the Multicultural Centre Prague and the Municipal Library of Prague introduced an Advisory Board for Multiculturalism consisting of linguists, librarians, representatives of NGOs and institutions that deal with migration, integration of migrants and assistance in various locations. The Advisory Board was the consultative organ of the project at the library, responsible for managing the project content and the selection of activities. The goals of the project were reflected in the local activities.

The Advisory Board actively participated in the preparation and initial phases of the project between June and October 2009. In the second half of the project, the board was in charge of project monitoring, consultation, evaluation and planning of further activities that could potentially continue after the

project's completion. Members of the Advisory Board have participated in the organisation of a seminar and workshops for librarians and assisted in the preparation of information brochures about the project and the library and its offers in foreign languages.

One of the advantages was heterogenous composition of the Advisory Board members in background and experience. Among the members were two migrants employed in academia, one with experience in library work and the other in work with migrants. The other members of the Advisory Board were represented by different education organisations supporting young talented migrants; organisations offering Czech language courses for foreigners and courses for integration; organisations which monitor migration trends and situations while providing education on the subject to the rest of the public. Authors of textbooks of Czech for foreigners and library managers also participated in the Advisory Board. Such collaboration endorsed mutual relations of the participating organisations and increased opportunities for future cooperation and support.

5. Needs Assessment of the target groups

The members of the Advisory Board were actively and systematically involved in gathering information on the needs of migrants living in Prague. During the preparatory phase in the summer of 2009, the individual members of the Advisory Board looked into the needs of the groups of migrants with whom their organisations work (i.e. young migrants, migrants with a permanent residence permit living and working in Prague, etc.). These people are very familiar with the actual needs of the migrants and the migration situation (fore example, new language requirements for the application for permanent residency and other similar needs). Very important was likewise statistical data in the area of migration (for example, higher representation of migrants or certain language groups in certain parts of Prague).

During the Advisory Board meetings, these needs and overall findings were discussed and priorities regarding the focus of the project on certain groups of Prague's migrants were set. However, systematic identification of the needs of the target groups continued throughout the whole duration of the project. During the second phase of the project, this procedure helped to focus the project activities to those most in need and on demand (extending Czech language courses to other locations in Prague, launching summer courses that would help overcome the lack of courses provided by other organisations during the summer holiday months, etc.). This continuous monitoring of the migrants' needs was carried out by the Advisory Board, library staff, and partner organisations as well as by the migrants themselves.

6. Main project activities and its realisation

6.1 Library Information Materials

After the preparation phase in summer 2009, new services for migrants were communicated through library information brochures produced in 7 foreign languages: Russian, Ukrainian, Mongolian, German, English, Vietnamese and Chinese. A notice was posted on the websites of non-profit organisations in Prague that deal with migrants and the news was also spread to organisations and associations of migrants via e-mail, telephone, by volunteers and MCP's external co-workers. The new library services were also advertised in minority-oriented media and Czech radio³.

The translated library information materials provide rules on library use, information about library services and help for Internet and Wi-Fi users. Koniáš, the information booklet for new users explaining the library system, had a special simplified version translated into seven languages and was customized for non-Czech speakers. This booklet instructs how users should carry out searches if a reader already knows the desired title or author. All translated materials are available in print or can be electronically downloaded from the library webpage dedicated to the project "Libraries for All" (www.mlp.cz/libraries).

6.2 Infopoints

A library is a place which provides people with information. For this purpose, the Municipal Library of Prague opened an Information Center in the Central branch of the library and reading rooms in the network of other branches. In October 2009, two Infopoints for migrants offering e-learning language courses were opened at the Central library and MLP's Opatov branch. The number of Infopoint users from the migrant community increased in December 2009. Among the users were also NGOs who are using the service to acquire information for their clients. The Infopoint information sources have to be updated continually. There are also PCs with language e-learning software available to Infopoint users.

³ Program of the Czech radio Zaostřeno na cizince (15.12.2009) (http://www.rozhlas.cz/iradio/archiv?p_num_from=40&p_num_offset=20&p_no_date_limit=1&p_po=1977&p_pattern=), report on the multicultural education in libraries in Prague Monitor (August 2009) etc.

6.3 Courses for Migrants

With respect to their integration in society and position in the labor market, one of the main needs of migrants living in Prague was identified as being the acquisition of the Czech language and of basic computer skills. Therefore, as early as October 2009, a **computer course for migrants** was launched as part of the project. The course was



attended by a small group of women, mainly from the Ukraine and Russia, and lasted until the end of January 2010. Another course followed in February and the library hired a new tutor who could better handle situations when explanation in many languages was required. The popularity of the training has gradually increased. Two-hour classes ran once a week at the library's Opatov branch. Migrants started to use the services of the library, in particular computer rooms and study rooms, available without reader's ID-cards.



An example of a very successful practice is the **Low-threshold Czech for Foreigners** organised by MKC and MLP in partnership with the Centre for Integration of Foreigners (CIC) in Prague. Starting in January 2010, the courses have attracted such a large number of attendees (around 50 students per course) that classes were extended to the MLP's Smichov branch, running twice a week at all locations. All these locations can be characterized as parts of Prague with a significant migrant background. The geographical extension to Smichov meant covering areas where most migrants either work or live. We were very surprised at the composition of course groups. Students originated from countries all over the world, including Russia, China, Japan, Australia, a number of African countries, Europe and North America. The training was based on a specific methodology that was awarded the LABEL prize in 2009⁴.

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⁴ This is an award that encourages new initiatives in the field of teaching and learning languages.

on specific everyday-life situations with topics including the post office, restaurant, Employment Office, library, hospital, etc. Furthermore, the topics repeat, so that they can be discussed in more depth and also so that students who miss some of the classes are able to catch up. The main objective of the course is to improve participants' communication abilities in the Czech language. There are 15 students per one teacher and if the number of students ever exceeds 15, an additional teacher joins the class. This approach is very effective, as it enables better control, better cooperation in groups, as well as more creative teaching techniques (role play demonstrated by teachers, etc.). The cooperation between the library and CIC, which started in the course of the project, will continue after the project finishes. The library provides space and the CIC is in charge of the course content. We consider this collaboration very convenient, as currently the library has no additional financial or personnel capacity to run such courses and CIC, in turn, has no suitable space. The result is mutual assistance. At the same time, the library achieves its objective to serve as a local multicultural education centre.

6.4 Library cooperation with non-profit organisations

Our cooperation with a non-government organisation Berkat started in December 2009. Together we have organised library events for children. In January, children visited the library and participated in an interactive program to learn about how it functions. This has become such a popular event that we repeated it in the summer.



Almost all these children visitors registered for MLP membership shortly after their visit to the library, even though their registration was not coordinated in any way. The cooperation of MLP with Berkat has continued. A weekend out of Prague for children was planned for May 2010, with the topic being "My home". Works created in artistic workshops were exhibited at the library's Opatov branch in September 2010.



6.5 Exhibition “My Home”

The exhibition of foreign artists titled “My home” was held in September 2010 in Opatov. We sought migrants living in Prague who devote their leisure time to create new and original art but, for various reasons, have not showcased their work. The works of art, including photographs, sculptures, paintings, traditional clothing and accessories, were displayed in public spaces of the library. Combined with the works of children, the exhibition provided an unusual experience to all library visitors. The beginning of the exhibition was marked by an exhibition opening in combination with a rich cultural program for adults and children. An announced competition of the same name occurred for the children of migrants. The highlight of the gallery opening was the fashion show of felt garments and accessories from four designers from Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Israel. The exhibit consisted of nine artists from a group of migrants and was a unique occasion using the gallery space of the library. The activity allowed migrants to present their work and their culture, to get to know and work with other migrants as well as the library staff, and to experience cooperation with the organization and to be actively exposed in the library space.



6.6 Librarian education

Besides the new library services for migrants, the second main aspect our project has focused on the training of library staff. In 2009, a theoretically-oriented seminar for librarians was held. Contributions on the project “Libraries for All”, on the overall migration situation in the Czech Republic and Prague, communication with migrants and the needs of migrants, as well as good practice in the integration of migrants in libraries of the Czech Republic (Jiri Mahen Library in Brno, Regional Science Library in Liberec) and abroad were presented. Examples of good practice were particularly beneficial. In the final part of the seminar, a panel discussion with spokespeople and other guests was held, covering the topic “The role of libraries in education and integration of migrants”.



Two practically-oriented workshops for librarians, with 20 participants each, took place in February 2010. The participants were the staff members of the MLP Central library and MLP branches operating in parts of Prague with migrant communities. The topic was “Communication with migrants in a library and experience from the ESME project”. Librarians have had an opportunity to prepare and experience common communication situations that occur in a library (reader registration, loans, book reservations and losses, information search, etc). Based on the workshop, a handbook for librarians providing guidance and basic phrases in Czech and English was produced. The workshop also discussed topics



on media investigation in the library system and detailed information about literature that migrants might be interested in. Librarians keep informed about new activities of the project and current issues related to library services for migrants via library intranet. Members of the Advisory Board and other collaborators of non-profit organisations were working on this staff training. This cooperation has been very effective and beneficial.

7. Critical factors for success

1) Establish cooperation with other specialized organisations

Although the library in the Czech Republic is considered a place which provides information and education for everybody without distinction as to race and ethnic origin, it is still problematic to achieve some of these aims due to the lack of contacts, experience and available staff. Cooperation with other specialized organisations will help use library resources, services and structure more efficiently and help develop the library network.

2) Development of library connections

It often happens that libraries do not have either the financial or human resources to implement necessary services for migrants. Cooperation with non-profit organisations, which provide services for migrants, is a good and effective way of improving the situation and under the project, libraries enabled organisations to realise many new services for migrants. Within this project, libraries extended their services, acquired new contacts and potential readers, while migrants got a chance to know more about the library, its services and offers and collaborating organisations got the chance to work in more suitable spaces and conditions.

3) Systematic monitoring of the migrants' needs

Systematic Needs Assessment at the beginning of the project and systematic and continuous need monitoring throughout the project as well as responding to the latest needs has proved to be a necessary condition for successful project implementation.

4) Experience sharing with project partners

Experience sharing with the project partner organisations as well as drawing inspiration from their successful services for migrants has been of great benefit to the local part of the project.

8. Evaluation

During the preparatory phase of the project, MKC Prague and MKP focused on researching the needs of migrants living in Prague. The project activities were devised in the summer of 2009 on the basis of these identified needs. Their realization underlay the regular monitoring of the success of the library services and, in addition, if the service fulfilled the actual needs of the migrants. The evaluation was carried out using questionnaire surveys given to those attending the courses and the library visitors, as well as the lecturers and librarians throughout the whole project. There was regular evaluation throughout the project during the meetings of the MKC Prague and MKP staff and supervision of the progress of the project activities from both the MKC Prague and MKP side.

The questionnaire survey was realized in these areas:

1. Basic computer courses
(a survey for all participants at the end of both courses in January and May 2010)
2. Low-threshold Czech courses for foreigners
(a survey for all participants in both courses at the end of half the year)
3. Infopoints for foreigners
(a questionnaire survey for the employees in the information centre at the Central library and the study at the Opatov branch library at the end of the project)
4. The Advisory Board for Multiculturalism
(a questionnaire survey at the end of the project, regular evaluation occurred at the end of every meeting of the group)
5. Library informational materials for foreigners
(a questionnaire survey between the librarians in May 2010)
6. Seminar and workshops for librarians
(a questionnaire survey between both the participants and the lecturers)
7. An overall evaluation of the project between the librarians from the branches where the main project activities were carried out (the Central library, Opatov, and Smíchov) and even in other branches (May 2010, September 2010).

Overall, it is possible to say that the activities were evaluated by the participants as very good or excellent. For the computer classes, students were happy with the structure and layout of the curriculum, as well as its relevance to the participants, in addition to the high quality of the

demonstration and helpfulness on the part of the lecturer. However, they found the extent of the curriculum less beneficial. Almost all of them suggested that they were interested in visiting another continuing course (also one participant repeated the beginner course in the spring as she wished to fill in and strengthen her skills). The overwhelming interest in the Czech language courses was a surprise for the library as well as the lecturers as right from the start the classes were visited by twice the amount of students than at similar courses offered in different parts of Prague by the Centre for the Integration of Foreigners (CIC). The library reacted to the large amount of interest by opening another course, and even so, the number of participants remained very high as new students continued to come throughout the year. Courses on socio-cultural minimums in the end were not realized because they were being offered in the fall 2009 by a different NGO in Prague and they overlapped with the demands for these other services. The MKC Prague and MKP wanted to anticipate the need to double services and for this reason, they decided implementing the language classes as more suitable for in this area in Prague there is continually more demand than what is offered.

From the survey, the foreign language materials are used above all else in the Central library. This is due to their accessibility on the library website, at the Infopoints and the print version in all branches, which are visited by migrants to a greater extent. A standout problem noticed by the librarians at the Infopoints is the lack of language knowledge of the library staff and, in the future, they would very much appreciate courses of English for the librarians. For this need we reacted at the end of the project by creating a Czech-English dictionary of phrases and terms concerning library topics. The Infopoints are used above all else for informational material on NGOs, foreign-language magazines, and the internet. The E-learning courses are used more at the library at Opatov. The library considers the Infopoints as integral parts of their activities and so has decided that in the event of future renovations of the Central library, the Infopoint will be placed in a more prominent location.

The members of the Advisory Board greatly appreciated that the content of the project really responded to the actual needs of the migrants, which reflected their main interest in the project activities and library services overall. Furthermore, it was very positive that the library progressively took over active work and takes care independently of continuing the project activities and even contacts. They view as less positive the library's financial situation, which result in a difficult transformation of the library and which meant that some of the original plans were not realized (for example, the implementation of multilingual information signs, boards, and labels in the library).

Both the workshops and the seminars were evaluated as very good by the participants. The workshops proved to be ideal for thoroughly informing the librarians about the philosophy behind LMEC, about the process and offers of the project. Additionally, the librarians very much appreciated the practical portion aimed at communication, because from their side they glimpsed the greatest shortcomings. Also welcomed by the librarians was the participation of the migrants representing all the language groups which the librarians most often encounter in the library, and the chance to realistically try the most common communication situation in the library. It was observed from the surveys that the librarians need to be more aware of the concrete needs of the migrants visiting the library and have continual reciprocal feedback.

The evaluation of the project from the side of the library management and librarians from the branches actively involved in the project was very positive. Everyone was regularly well-informed and using multiple avenues of communication about the progress of the project. Also the majority expressed a high interest in the theme of multicultural librarianship. In the eyes of the librarians, the new services were used well by the migrants and similarly, the librarians consider themselves – in view of their position – usually well-informed about the situation of the migrants in their region. The librarians assessed negatively the financial resources, which do not allow the library to expand and actualize library funds adequately for demand (especially literature in foreign languages and modern textbooks of foreign languages) and adapt the space of the library (signs and the library information system in foreign languages, etc.). The librarians consider the decision that the project was intensively situated at three branches of the library as effective. The librarians are of the opinion that, in the future, it would be good to potentially concentrate all the foreign language books and material to certain branches, which would simplify accessibility and orientation in terms of the library funds. This request corresponds to the experiences of partner libraries from the ESME project; for example, from the Public Library of Frankfurt am Main where there are two branches in the network that focus on services for migrants.

9. Future Prospects

The project "Libraries for All" enabled the Municipal Library to expand its services for migrants, establish new contacts with migrant-oriented organisations both in the Czech Republic and abroad and to continue to provide further training and education to its staff. The project results laid the foundations for further development of the library towards becoming a multicultural education center in several areas:

- The Municipal Library of Prague was provided with information materials about the library and its services in several languages. These materials can be easily updated and used beyond the scope of the project.
- The library has broadened its offer of information services through the so-called Infopoints that have become part of its Information Centers. These will continue to operate under the guidance of the library staff, including a special website with information for library readers with migrant background.
- The Information Center in the Central Library will be renovated in such a way that it will contribute towards making the Infopoint area more open and central for visitors.
- The library has established cooperation with the Center for Integration of Foreigners, together with which it will continue to provide Czech language courses. This form of cooperation can serve as an example for other libraries in the Czech Republic that face financial difficulties when they attempt to organise language courses by themselves.
- The Center for Integration of Foreigners is preparing a workshop for MLP librarians working with children. The aim of this workshop is to ensure well-delivered children's lectures even if some members of the young audience do not speak Czech. The main focus is on how to engage these children in group activities and how to pass on to them basic information on the library. Even teachers are interested in this course.
- The library offers computer courses run by MLP staff (basic user knowledge, no certificate awarded). These courses are becoming popular among those migrants who missed the PC courses led by an instructor in 2009/2010. The MLP asked the local authorities for help with

securing financial support for these courses, which would make it possible to hold certain courses for migrants only. There has been no response thus far.

- The newly established contacts with the majority of local organisations addressing the issues of education and integration of migrants are sources of expert support for the library. They also offer an opportunity for further independent development of the library following the project's end.
- The MLP librarians welcomed the project because it helped to kick-start important activities for migrants. It also equipped the library staff with practical experience useful in communication with migrants. The library's services have become more open to migrants and migrants in return have found their way to the library.

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