

There was an international conference carried out in Nový Bydžov from 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> of May 2008 that was funded by the European Commission from the Europe for Citizens program. The conference was carried out under the aegis of Mr. Oldřich Vlasák, member of the EU Parliament, chairman of the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic and executive president of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions. The title and aim of the conference was:

## **Network foundation of partner-towns from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Latvia and Italy, and their related regions.**

There were 130 participants from 5 EU countries meeting in Nový Bydžov. The three-day-meeting was officially started as well as ended by the EU anthem – Beethoven's Ode to Joy. Invitation to the conference was accepted also by some important people – mayor of the Kralovehradecký region Mr. Pavel Bradík and member of the CR Parliament Mr. David Kafka. In order to remember the Europe Day, there was also Mr. Oldřich Vlasák under whose aegis the whole conference took place.

Participants worked in 5 work-groups, thematically focused on various areas of public life. Leadership of individual delegations was represented by mayors, city-mayors, town-presidents and chairmen of regions. This leadership discussed mainly aims of the conference and possibilities for further cooperation. Other participants were in advance divided into areas, they represented themselves:

- state administration, self-administration, public investments
- public services, education, waste management
- social services, health services and seniors
- sport, culture, hunting, non-profit organizations

Each delegation had a prepared presentation focusing on specifics of their region within the participating country. Therefore, each work-group had an ideal occasion to discuss problems and differences within individual participating countries.

In agreement with meeting the European culture heritage, delegates visited a castle Karlova koruna in Chlumec nad Cidlinou. Afterwards in Košice, trees of partnership were planted, in the Alley of region, by delegates of each participating country. Absolutely spontaneously then, each nation celebrated each newly-planted tree by means of their national song.

Outcome of the conference is firstly the collective volume of all presentations – there are altogether 21 of them – characterizing specific features of participating countries in individual areas of public life. Second outcome is the contact database of involved partners, where contacts from each country are being divided according to a structure

proposed by the participants. The collective volume as well as contacts will be published on the web-pages of all partners and so it will be available for broad public. Conference outcomes will be also discussed within self-government bodies of each partner. Conference, in that way, directly supports future twinning projects, that will allow absolutely concrete opinion and experience exchange related to actual topics, allows learning about people and culture variety, allows establishment of personal friendships within EU countries.

Conference entirely fulfilled its aim. Besides prepared activities, all work-groups focused on their tasks in a very active way. Contact database has been formed, presentations are prepared to be published, concrete suggestions for following projects were proposed. As a bonus, participants were in the Nový Bydžov region welcomed by gorgeous spring weather.

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In Nový Bydžov, 18<sup>th</sup> May 2008