

The multicultural rural community centre for migrants in Rakovice

The project idea consists in building up a multicultural rural community centre in a small village Rakovice in South Bohemia where our organisation hired out a historical fortress with farm outbuildings from the duke Schwarzenberg in the year 2007. The main goal is to create a walk – in centre in the countryside for both the migrants and the Czech majority society/esp. the locals that will be promoting the good integration practice. The main project activities are to organise psychosocial therapeutic stays for refugees (esp. those who live in the asylum centres); to organise free time activities, summer camps for socioeconomically disadvantaged immigrant children and the youth (esp. those living in the asylum centres) and the local kids; to organise a Czech language courses for disadvantaged immigrant families; to organise an intercultural educational workshops for experts working with immigrants and students lectured by the immigrants themselves; to run agricultural activities (the livestock, vegetables, fruits) to ensure a part self – sufficiency; to create working opportunities for socially excluded immigrants in the reconstruction activities and the operation and maintenance of the centre and the farm; to share the community centre with the locals (celebrating festivals, free internet zone, child centre); to organise meetings and conferences for organisations working with immigrants; to rent out the centre for team building activities of NGO ´s. All the activities are based on the involvement of volunteers.

The rural centre is closely connected with the migrant community centre InBaze in Prague run by our organisation since 2006. According to the results of a research concerning the needs of our clients we realised there is a call for activities in the nature – esp. for the children of our clients. We closely cooperate with many NGO ´s working with immigrants that promoted this idea.

The phases according to financing

November 2006 – May 2007

We started with the search of the appropriate object in the country side which would meet our criteria accessibility from Prague, a capacity of the building (minimum 30 people), possibility for farming, a convenient financial conditions, good conditions of the object, nice environments). We visited many objects in the Czech countryside, esp. abandoned catholic presbyteries but the most convenient offer we got from the duke Schwarzenberg. The fortress has a capacity for more then 30 people and there are farm outbuildings in quite good conditions. We signed in May 2007 a contract for 15 years with the possibility of extension - the annual rent is cca 570 euro and as a part of the project we pledged to draw up an architectonic study of the fortress. This phase was realised by both workers and volunteers of Berkat (cca 6 people) on a voluntary base.

June 2007 – June 2008

We gained a grant of 50.000 euro for one-year project called Pontes – Bridges of Berkat from the EEA grants.

The project consists of 8 activities.

1) Team building – (June 2007).

The team consists of a coordinator (a full time job); an economic and administrative assistant (half – time job); a children camps coordinator (part-time job); operation and maintenance worker (a full time job); cca 30 volunteers.

2) Preparation and realisation of the content and the methods of interactive teaching for the intercultural courses (July 2007 – March 2008).

The coordinator made a team of immigrants (10 people) who will be lecturing the Czech students (10 people) and people working with immigrants esp. from the state institutions (10 people). They have been developing the programme and the interactive methods of teaching for the courses. The three-day courses will take part in the term 18. -20.5. and 23. -25.5. 2008. The courses as pilot one are free of charge financed from the grant.

3) PR activities (September 2007 – January 2008).

The coordinator has been offering the courses to various state and non-state institutions, to high schools and universities. We have introduced our project into the local community - in the end of August we took part in the famous local Flower fair in Čimelice – a town nearby where we presented our plans and introduced activities of our organisation. In October and November we organised two visits into the primary school in the town Čimelice and Písek nearby where we were lecturing about intercultural issues and Berkat activities. From November ahead we started cooperation with a high school of civil engineering in Pilsen who have been sending their students for the fieldwork in our centre. They made for us a geodesist survey free of charge. In December we coorganised the St.Nicolaus festival with the local community in Rakovice (cca 40 people) and we organised two Christmas fairs in Rakovice and a town Blatna nearby where we were selling our products from Afghan and Chechnya projects and were presenting the Rakovice project to the local community. In December there was a document on TV about our director Petra Prochazkova, a famous war journalist and humanitarian worker where she presented our project to the public and we have received many supportive feed backs including material and financial help.

4) Reconstruction and maintenance activities (June 2007 – June 2008).

There have been each month weekend reconstruction camps with the involvement of volunteers – both immigrants and Czechs (esp. students of social work). Everybody was working free of charge with a great enthusiasm. The organisation provided just the foodstuff and working material financed from profits of the social business ethnocatering run by Berkat in Prague. We also succeeded in getting material support from Boromey Religious Sisters who provided us with some furniture. From January on we started the breeding of 5 sheep. We already have a purchaser –the Afghan restaurant in Prague that faces difficulties in finding halal meat in the Czech Republic. In spring we are starting to grow the vegetables in the garden.

5) Preparation and realisation of language courses for the immigrants (individuals) and the immigrant families (October 2007 – May 2008).

The coordinator has been organising the courses and selective procedures of the immigrants (10 people for the course) and the language agency. The 3 rounds of three days intense Czech

language courses will take place in April and May 2008. The courses are free of charge financed from the grant.

6) Preparation and realisation of children camps (June 2007 – December 2008).

The children camp coordinator with the help of volunteers has been organising 7 three days children camps for cca 20 kids. Four took place in summer 2007; the rest will take place in April, May and June 2008. In August there will be two weeks summer camp for both immigrant and Czech kids. From September on the itinerary has not been settled yet. In January 2008 we succeeded in obtaining a one year grant cca 37.000 euro from the telephonic company O2 which is intended for the children programmes in Rakovice.

7) Fundraising activities for the further development of the centre (June 07– June 08).

Preparation and implementation of the fundraising strategy of the soft projects ensuring the programmes and activities – the regional social grants of the European Structural Funds (dead line June 2008), the block grant of the EEA (dead line March 2008); the hard project ensuring the reconstruction of the buildings – regional operation programmes of ESF (July 2008). Except of the grants of EEA and O2 the other financial sources have been the profits of the social business of Berkat “ethnocatering” June 2007 – February 2008 cca 1.480 euro; the sponsor gift from a private donors cca 3.700 euro; the material support of the landlord (fuel). The local municipality paid for the garbage disposal a sum of 370 euro. In September 2007 we made a contract with an architectonic agency to make a study for the reconstruction under the condition they will be paid after we succeed in getting the new ESF grant (they take it as a charitable activity). Self – financing will be ensured trough agricultural activities, organising a paid intercultural educational courses for the Czech majority society and trough letting the centre to other institutions for conferences, team building activities etc.

8) Preparation and evaluation weekend of the project (March 2008 – June 2008)

The coordinator has been inviting the colleagues from state and non-state organisations working with migrants in order to evaluate the project Pontes and to develop the ideas of cooperation in the rural community centre. The evaluation will take part in June 2008 for cca 15 people.

July 2008 – December 2009

The innovation of the programmes will be based in celebrating various religious festivals during the year where the immigrants and the local people can share their traditions and get connected. The financing has been so far ensured from the O2 grant till December 2008 and we hope to succeed in a second appeal of the Block grant (EEA funds) – (the offered sum is 75.000 euro for 18 months project from July 2008 – December 2009). We will apply even in other programmes of ESF and European Refugee Fund for the psychotherapeutic treatment stays for esp. refugee women.

January 2010 – January 2012

We are planning a complete reconstruction of the fortress that is needed esp. because of the bad electricity network and the heating conditions. We will apply for the regional structural programme grant in June/July 2008 – the national agency still not confirmed the date of appeal. The requested amount of money will be cca 560.000 euros. For this period the programmes of the centre will be running in a limited regime. We are offered to use the rooms

of the castle in a town Čimelice 500 m far from the fortress that belongs to the duke Schwarzenberg.

January 2012 –

We want to continue in our activities. In order to be self-sufficient as much as possible we are planning to reconstruct one farm outbuilding into a guest house with the ethnospécialities and the second outbuilding into a cultural centre both for migrants and the local community. The village Rakovice is situated in a beautiful South Bohemian baroque landscape that is very popular by tourists. There is a tourist path just next to the fortress. The reconstruction is planned to be financed from the European Social Funds that will be accessible for the Czech Republic till 2015.

The website link with the photogallery: <http://www.berkat.cz/dokument.php?id=338>