



BULLETIN

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HEALTHY CITIES OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

INTERVIEW



**An interview
with Bohdan Mikusek,
Deputy Mayor of Valasske
Mezirici and HCP Politician**

In your profile on the city hall's web pages, you say that the quality of the environment in the city will be your priority. What has the city hall done in this respect?

Recently, we have focused on improving the environment and the quality of living in our housing estates. We trim the green areas, plant new trees and bushes, and deal with the parking within the estates. To reduce the number of cars passing through, we have placed traffic signs in the residential areas and installed humps on the roads. Reconstruction of the central heating system four years ago was certainly one of the major contributions to improved environment in the city. We did not want to add to the pollution by building new decentralised boiler houses, so we used the existing source of heat. Today, the city has a central hot water pipeline connected to the heating plant in the DEZA factory premises.

Last year's monitoring of air pollutant levels in Valasske Mezirici for the Zlin Regional Authority revealed that the quality of air in the city was not good. What do you think are the major causes of such pollution? Has the city taken any action for improvement?

Unfortunately, the poor quality of air is a long-term problem. There are two major causes: the heavy traffic, particular in the centre; and the three factories operating in the north-western part of the city. The planned by-pass around the city should help in terms of traffic. We organised a colloquium regarding this issue at the turn of January and February, requesting support for this project; the colloquium was attended by ministry officials, MPs, local authority representatives and experts from various institutions. As to the factories, all three intend to invest in environment-friendly technologies. They have been monitoring the level of air pollutants and passing on the information to us. Last September, the city hall has put into operation an air-pollution monitoring station, with the

data being transferred to the city's web pages every half an hour. DEZA and CS Cabot have undertaken to finance these activities. This year, we plan to install another monitoring device near the road running through the city.

NEWS

**HCCZ: Healthy Cities
Will Be Testing a Set of Criteria to
Be Used in Allocation of Subsidies
by Ministries and from EU Funds**

On March 4, 2005, the Governmental Council for Sustainable Development has acknowledged the set of criteria for determining the quality of local Agenda 21 (LA21) processes, prepared by the LA21 Working Group on the basis of the Healthy Cities League during 2004. The practical testing of the criteria has already started in Vsetin. Starting next year, the quality of individual LA21, clearly measurable on the basis of the criteria, could become one of the items taken into account by the ministries in granting subsidies to cities and a plus in the city halls' applications for grants from EU funds.

LA21 is an international programme for authorities to implement the principles of sustainable development at the local level, i.e. in municipalities, cities, microregions and regions. LA21 is directly related to the quality of public administration. In the long run, LA21 is about cooperating with the public to implement activities that positively influence the quality of life of the present inhabitants as well as the future generations of their children. The Czech Republic has achieved some excellent individual results in this area, but on the whole, the country is behind other EU member states. The level of LA21 will be judged depending on which criteria of the set the municipality will meet. There are five categories/levels: observers, D, C, B, and A, with A representing the ideal state of local administration functioning. Each category sets out criteria that the municipality needs to meet in order to move to the next category. These criteria include, without limitation, active involvement of the public in the planning of the municipality's development, financial support of LA21 activities by local administration, and organisation of campaigns such as the Earth Day or the European Mobility Week. The testing of the criteria started last year; the first results are already available in Vsetin. The City of Vsetin, awarded last year as the municipality with the greatest

contribution to the development of HCCZ Methodology, meets most of the criteria. Once the testing is completed and the set of LA21 criteria is approved by the Governmental Council for Sustainable Development, the quality of LA21 process, defined by the criteria, should become one of the items taken into account by the ministries in granting subsidies to cities and a plus in the city halls' applications for grants from EU funds.

Note: Comments from the Report on Activities of LA21 Working Group, submitted to the Governmental Council for Sustainable Development, were used in the article.

Vysocina: Partnership for Vysocina Immediately Met with Positive Responses

March 3 was the last day of Partnership for Vysocina, the 1st regional conference organised by the Vysocina Region and the Healthy Cities of the Czech Republic (HCCZ) in Velke Mezirici. The conference, with its main topic being the preparation of the region for the implementation of the European JROP 3.3 project, immediately met with positive responses.



Representatives of the Vysocina Region and officials of the Ministry for Local Development introduced the two hundred participants to a new long-term project that should significantly increase the efficiency of obtaining grants from European structural funds, thereby making the development of the region more dynamic. Municipal officials, representatives of the non-profit and agrarian sectors and entrepreneurs from all over Vysocina responded immediately. During the conference and shortly thereafter, the Regional Development Department received a number of offers for cooperation in the establishing of future development partnerships, which is one of the objectives of the project. Vysocina is one of the first regions where JROP 3.3 activities are already under way. The conference was attended by officials from the Ministry for Local Development, Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Agriculture, who reported about the results of introducing partnerships in their respective sectors, and appreciated the opportunity to use the current experience at the level of the Vysocina Region as a large and autonomous administrative unit. Ministry officials also praised Vysocina for its sustained effort to share its experience and best practice. Participants from other regions of the Czech Republic drew inspiration for similar

projects of their own. Marie Petrova from the Public Relations Department of the Ministry of Environment presented the LA21 process as the most effective form of partnership, practically implementing the principles of sustainable development, quality of life and strategic management at the local level. HCCZ Secretary Petr Svec added that the Healthy Cities Project enhanced the LA21 process to include conceptual health promotion in accordance with recommendations of the World Health Organisation.

Koprivnice: The Healthy City Introduces a New Project

The old centre of Koprivnice will become rejuvenated. The Masaryk Square will soon have a new look, designed by students of architecture from Brno, experts, city hall officials and the citizens.

For two years now, the City of Koprivnice has been implementing the Healthy Cities Project and local Agenda 21 as a regular HCCZ member. On the basis of community cooperation and with the methodological assistance of HCCZ, Koprivnice has put together its City Health Development Plan – Action Plan for 2005 – 2006. One of the objectives outlined by the Working Group for Environment and Housing is the “Adaptation of the Old Koprivnice Centre.” To achieve this objective, Koprivnice has launched an interesting project of making alterations to the old town centre, today’s Masaryk Square, which presently is something between a square and a park, fulfilling neither of the functions properly. In the first stage of the project, the city hall will work with the citizens to determine what the Masaryk Square should look like and what purpose it should be serving. The citizens will be invited to express their opinions in a public inquiry, and there will also be a drawing contest for basic school pupils. The first stage also includes a planning day – a working meeting of city officials, citizens and experts. City authorities should then use the final proposal as a basis for their decision regarding the Masaryk Square. The 2nd, 3rd and 4th year students of architecture from the University in Brno will present their architectonic visions of the old Koprivnice centre in their term papers. The designs will have been completed by June, and the students will exhibit them in Koprivnice in September.

Chrudim: Let’s Keep Our Teeth Healthy

As part of the Healthy Cities Project, Chrudim has recently launched a health-promotion programme for pre-school children entitled “Let’s Keep Our Teeth Healthy.” Five kindergartens joined the programme during February.

Starting from April 1, nearly six hundred pre-school kids in Chrudim will be instructed about taking proper care of their teeth. During three one-hour sessions, dental hygienist Ms Hornickova will teach the children to choose suitable dental care aids and to brush their teeth using the right technique, and will explain that a low-sugar diet is good for the teeth. The sessions will have the form of a fairy tale, with Toothie the

Puppet accompanying the children through the lessons. There will also be a number of related activities. At the kindergarten, the children will be given drinks with added fluorine that strengthens the teeth and increases the resistance of tooth enamel against acids. Each child will receive a package with fluorine gels and special toothpaste; the packages have been purchased for money provided by the city, the Ministry of Health and partly by the kindergartens. The dental hygienist will also meet with the parents.



The project includes a drawing contest entitled "Healthy Teeth = Clean Teeth." According to HCP coordinator Sarka Truneckova, the drawings will be exhibited and the best ones will be awarded during the Health Days campaign this autumn. All participants will receive small gifts. To begin with, a dentist visited the kindergartens in March for a preventive examination. The idea of the project came up in consultations with dentist and dental hygienist Dr. Kulhava, and the kindergarten of Dr. Malik then suggested that the project could be offered to all Chrudim kindergartens. The project was financially supported by the Ministry of Health, with Signal as a partner.



Vsetin District: Construction of Sewage Treatment Plant Launched after 5 Years of Preparation

On March 14 under the Devil Rocks in Lidecko, Minister of Environment Libor Ambrozek ceremonially launched the earthwork for Clean Becva River, a large project of sewage water treatment for fifteen cities and municipalities in the Vsetin district.



"The idea for the project first came up thirteen years ago. In 1999, it started to materialize. The key moment came in 2002, when the project was supported by the Flemish Government, receiving a grant for the preparation of environmental projects, and by the European Union," summed up Jaromir Kudlik, Deputy Mayor of Vsetin and Chairman of the Vsetinsko Microregion Association. By the end of 2006, 2 new sewage treatment plants will have been built, 5 current plants refurbished, 137 km of new sewage pipelines built, 6 km of current pipelines reconstructed, and 16 pump stations and 10 storm-water retention reservoirs built. The investments in Clean Becva River will total almost CZK 1.5 billion, of which 70% will be paid by the European Union and 5.8% by the State Environmental Fund. Minister Ambrozek emphasized the importance and uniqueness of the project. "This pioneer project deals with the treatment of sewage water for one quarter of inhabitants in the Zlin Region. It is also valuable as a group project, i.e. it involves fifteen towns and municipalities throughout the river basins of Vsetinska and Roznovska Becva, which is the area from which most municipalities in the Olomouc Region get their drinking water. Towns like Lipnik, Hranice or Prerov depend on drinking water from the Beskydy Mountains. This is why the project is of nationwide importance," pointed out Minister Ambrozek. Ambrozek said he considered Clean Becva River one of the best projects in the Czech Republic, and one that helped break trail for similar projects. "Clean Becva River was the first to prove that group projects addressing issues that involve the entire

river basins can be taken to Brussels and succeed," explained Ambrozek.

HCCZ: The Spring School Attracted Media Attention

HCCZ has been organising regular HCCZ Schools for its members since 2003 as a standard part of HCP coordinator training and local Agenda 21, providing new opportunities for discussions of HCP and LA21. This year's Spring School took place in Moravska Trebova between March 7 and 9, with twenty-five participants from all over the Czech Republic taking part.



HCCZ Schools customarily include the training of skills and knowledge necessary for the implementation of HCP and LA21 (such as hosting discussions with the public, promotion of Healthy Cities campaigns, and many others). In Moravska Trebova, the program focused on working with the public. "With Dana Divakova of the Institute for Community Development as tutor, we practised the best ways of addressing the public or dealing with problematic types of people," said HCP coordinator Veronika Capalova. In addition to the training, the organisers have arranged for a sightseeing tour of the city's historical centre. "We have shown the participants round the historical centre of our city and invited them to visit our Health-Promoting Kindergarten," added Deputy Mayor and HCP politician Marie Nechutova. Each HCCZ School includes a discussion of specific problems related to HCP and LA21. In Moravska Trebova, participants in the training and the Wednesday discussion workshop looked for answers to the following questions: What are the efficient ways of getting citizens involved in discussions about the City Health Development Plan? What is the exact procedure in preparing the basic part of the strategic community plan – the City Health Development Plan? What is the role of the coordinator in the process of implementation of HCP and LA21? Participants also discussed the joint campaigns of HCCZ as a platform for communication with citizens, and the web pages of the individual Healthy Cities and Regions. HCP coordinators Martina Pilkova of Hodonin, Sarka Truneczkova of Chrudim and Helena Bubnova of Mlada Boleslav shared their experience with getting the citizens involved in discussions about the strategic community plan. At the end of the Spring School, HCCZ Secretary Petr Svec awarded a certificate to each participant for completing the first of the six courses of the accredited training programme for HCP and LA21 coordinators.

The other two Schools to take place in the summer and autumn this year will carry on with the first part of the two-year programme. The Summer School of HCCZ will take place in Jihlava between July 12 and 15, followed by the Autumn School in Prostejov between November 2 and 4. The Spring School in Moravska Trebova attracted media attention; on the first day of the School, the Czech TV broadcast an interview with HCCZ Secretary Petr Svec, and local journalists reported about the School in the regional press. All related information, including the documentation, is available at <http://www.nszm.cz/js05>

HCCZ: The Association Organised a Seminar at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

On February 23, a HCCZ seminar under the auspices of Minister Zdenek Skromach took place at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. A total of fifty representatives from cities, municipalities and regions took part in the seminar, most of them from Departments of Social Affairs. It was the third time that the Ministry hosted a meeting of HCCZ members; this time, the topic was the community planning of social services (CPSS).

In his opening speech, Deputy Minister for Social Sector Marian Hosek emphasized the importance of getting the users of social services involved in their planning, and the crucial role that non-governmental non-profit organisations (NGOs) played in the planning process of the services. Martin Zarsky, Director of the Ministry's Social Services Department, informed the participants about the new tender for a public contract that the Ministry announced in the area of CPSS. The Ministry is looking for a supplier of an integrated methodology and strategy for social services planning. Bozena Sekaninova, Deputy Mayor of the Healthy City of Prostejov and a HCCZ Council member, welcomed the participants on behalf of the Council. HCCZ Secretary Petr Svec reported about the activities of HCCZ and its 56 members. Another Ministry representative, Monika Zavadilova of the Social Services Department, informed the participants about grant programmes and various ways of financing community planning from EU funds. NGOs are an important partner for the city halls in the CPSS process. Following the report of Ms Zavadilova, representatives of city halls and NGOs from several Healthy Cities presented their overall experience with the CPSS process. Detailed information,



including the photo documentation, is available at: <http://www.nszm.cz/mpsv>. The seminar at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs was another in the series of meetings that HCCZ has been organising under the auspices of Czech Ministers. The next meeting is scheduled to take place at the Ministry for Local Development on April 21. It will deal with the issues of public involvement and the building of partnerships in regions and large cities, particularly with respect to EU funds.

IN BRIEF

- HCCZ members are getting ready for the international Earth Day campaign. In many cities, Earth Day celebrations will continue for about a week. The campaign will culminate on Friday, April 22. Details will be available at <http://nszm.cz/dze> and in the next issue of HCCZ Bulletin.
- On March 31, the Spring General Meeting of HCCZ will take place in Koprivnice; from the representatives of member municipalities, the General Meeting will elect the new Council, Audit Committee and HCCZ Chair for the next two years. The General Meeting will be preceded by another

MCAP session; following the February meeting of children and student parliaments in Trebic, young generation will once again be at the centre of attention, as the session will be about Maternity Centres.

- The councillors of the South-Moravian city of Kurim have recently approved a change in their HCCZ membership from an observer, which the city had only been for a few weeks, to a regular member. Deputy Mayor David Holman explained: "Our priority at the moment is to prepare a high-quality strategic plan for the city's development. We have greatly benefited from the methodology of HCCZ as well as the experience related by our colleagues from other Healthy Cities, such as Vsetin. We have tailored some of the best practice from other cities to match our needs. It is a bit like orienteering – you are finding your way as you run, trusting it is the right one to get you to the finish."
- Strasin, a new regular member of HCCZ in the Sumava Mountains, plans to create a microregion and cooperate more with the Sumava National Park Administration. "The Sumava National Park is literally crowded with tourists. In the future, we plan to propose the establishing of a new microregion and, together with other municipalities, start developing the tourist business in the Sumava region," says Mayor Jan Helisek.

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(The photographs were provided by the archives of HCCZ member cities, municipalities and regions.)