



HEALTHY CITIES OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

INTERVIEW



An interview with Jaromira Vitkova, Deputy Mayor of the Healthy City of Boskovice and Healthy Cities Project (HCP) and Local Agenda 21 politician

Absence of Barrier-Free Access Is a Common Problem

In early March, the Healthy City of Boskovice hosted a seminar on barrier-free access with respect to historical settlements and city centres. What do you do in Boskovice in this regard?

Barrier-free access is a common problem, particularly in historical buildings. In Boskovice, there are 45 buildings listed as cultural heritage. Some of them are easily accessible to disabled citizens, such as the St. Jacob Church, others remain problematic. The key to solution is, in my opinion, the attitude of the property owners and the conservationists. All recently reconstructed buildings owned by the City of Boskovice are barrier-free. If the city raises enough money to renovate its Renaissance city hall, we will definitely make it barrier-free.

The Boskovice region has recently invited people to submit draft projects for drawing upon EU subsidies. Were there any projects helping the disabled?

As part of Local Partnerships for Drawing upon EU Funds, NGO representatives and city officials from the traffic and social affairs departments submitted a joint project entitled Education as a Means for Social Integration of Citizens Vulnerable to Social Exclusion. Having started in 2003, the cooperation has produced tangible results, such as the proposal for barrier-free access from roads to pavements; the first stage of the project has been completed. The plan is for one of the three buildings housing our elementary school to be barrier-free; at present, there is an elevator and barrier-free toilettes for disabled pupils in the building. We have also encouraged the institutions and banks based in our city to make their premises barrier-free using money from the State Road Infrastructure Fund.

Can you tell us about the plans for the Healthy Cities Project in Boskovice in the near future?

Our plans for the near future are related to European and worldwide

campaigns. This year's Earth Day campaign will include a variety of events co-organised by schools, the House of Children and Youth and Arboretum Smelcovna. There will be tree and bush planting, various contests as well as project teaching as part of the Month of Forests. In May, there will be events to celebrate the World No Tobacco Day; in June, we will be joining the Days without Injuries campaign. The 4th pupil and student conference will be held on the occasion of the upcoming Environment Day, accompanied by a number of other traditional events. We would also like to follow up on our successful cooperation with HCCZ and, together with our partners, develop the projects we have contributed to the project accumulator to prepare final applications for EU subsidies.

TOPIC OF THE MONTH: BARRIER-FREE ACCESS

There are an estimated 1.2 million disabled people living in the Czech Republic, with up to one third of citizens suffering from limited mobility, whether long-term or short-term. This means that every third citizen has to face a number of annoying barriers every day. What may be a routine trip to work or local authorities, a visit to the theatre or a friends' place for a healthy person can become a hurdle race for a paraplegic, often quite dangerous. In addition to physical obstacles, there are social barriers and prejudices that often build a wall between the world of the healthy people and those with physical or mental disability. Together with their citizens, the Healthy Cities, Municipalities and Regions have been working to bring these barriers down and improve the quality of life for disabled people. This issue of HCCZ Bulletin brings detailed information on how this problem is tackled in Czech Healthy Cities, the Czech Republic and abroad. Apart from the regular columns, you can read about the special seminar held at the Ministry of Education in February on the free time of children and youth, which was our last topic of the month.



Paraplegics can now enjoy comfortable and safe travelling to the Healthy City of Pelhrimov by older Diesel rail cars, as the city contributed money towards purchasing a new lifting platform for the local train station.

TOPIC OF THE MONTH HOME AND ABROAD

Europe – Open and Accessible to Everyone

All of us have to overcome obstacles and barriers in our lives. We often tend to forget, though, that in addition to physical barriers influencing one's mobility in general, quite a few of our fellow citizens face social barriers. These barriers include limited access to education, few opportunities to participate in social life, or inability to find work. Inequality of genders, that is, unequal social position of men and women, plays an important part in this regard. There are a number of state as well as non-governmental organisations focusing on various vulnerable groups of citizens to prevent these people from being socially isolated and discriminated.

To gradually remove physical barriers from cities, the Ministry for Regional Development has adopted a decree on **general technical requirements to enable use of buildings by persons with limited mobility and orientation ability**, which provides for the duty to make all public buildings accessible, for instance by installing elevators, ramps, signal zones, guidance lines, etc. The National Disability Council (NDC), a regular member of the European Disability Forum since 2004, is an institution playing an important part in this regard. NDC prepared the draft **Medium-Term Concept**



The special seminar held in Boskovice informed the participants about the barriers faced by physically disabled people when visiting historical buildings.

of Governmental Policy regarding Disabled Citizens (details are available at <http://wtd.vlada.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=6473>) as a fundamental strategic and conceptual document through 2009. NDC is also the main advisory body of the **Governmental Committee for Disabled Citizens**. Their cooperation produced the black book and the white book, which identify incorrect procedures used by construction authorities when evaluating public buildings in terms of their accessibility to disabled citizens (details are available at <http://nrzp.cz/upload/cerna%20a%20bila.doc>). For the past ten years, NDC has co-organised specialised **Non-Handicap** exhibitions (this year's exhibition took place in Prague between April 4 and 7); it also extends the annual **Bridges** award to an institution that has gone beyond the scope of its duties to help improve the environment for the disabled. The target group of the **Rytmus** civic association are children and adults with mental and combined disability. Its projects include **School for All**, which is intended to support the integration of children with special learning needs in the regular school system. Following up on last year's success, Rytmus has

organised the **Equal Opportunity – Employer 2006** competition for companies employing disabled or socially disadvantaged people in regular workplaces.

There were an estimated **38 million disabled people** living in the European Union in 2003, which means one in ten EU citizens of all age categories. The EU tries to balance the various handicaps of these citizens by programmes such as **Community Initiative EQUAL** (CIP EQUAL), which supports specific projects currently co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF). Elimination of various forms of discrimination and barriers is one of the fundamental goals of the **EU Lisbon Strategy**, which has defined the basic direction of the current as well as future development of the EU. To implement the strategy, there are the EU Social Inclusion Strategy and the EU Disability Strategy.

Since 1997, the **European Disability Forum** has defended the interests of disabled citizens within the EU; it serves as the supranational umbrella organisation for the national councils of EU member states and its representatives work with individual EU bodies, such as the European Commission.

The Healthy City of Boskovice Hosted a National Seminar on Barrier-Free Access

Making historical monuments accessible to disabled people was the main topic of a special seminar taking place in the South-Moravian town of Boskovice on March 7. The presentations included examples of best practice from cities and regions in terms of barrier-free access.

The seminar entitled **How Do We Make Historical Monuments Accessible to the Disabled?** was co-organised by HCCZ and the Association of Historical Settlements in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia and was attended by 60 participants. The issue is all the more important for the fact that buildings listed as cultural heritage often house various public institutions. Architect Irena Sestakova of the Prague School of Architecture talked about the ways to harmonise the requirements of conservationists and the need to provide barrier-free access to these buildings, offering examples of successful solutions. Representatives of NGOs defending the interests of the disabled pointed out some of the problems relating to barrier-free access. In particular, disabled citizens feel there is not enough information about this issue and the technical solutions, if any, are often far from perfect.

Presentations on the topic were delivered by the hosting city of Boskovice and other Healthy Cities. As an example of best practice, Milena Antonovicova, coordinator of the **Paraplegic Rights League Consultation Centre for Elimination of Barriers**, reported about the **Spilberk Castle** in Brno, which is fully accessible to paraplegics and is equipped with mobile ramps, has a parking place for paraplegics and an excellent system of guidance signs. Similarly equipped are the listed buildings of the Moravian Gallery and the seat of the Technical University principal; Brno also has barrier-free public areas such as the Jakubské Square.

HCP and LA21 coordinator Veronika Capalova of the Healthy City of **Moravská Třebová** introduced the city's **Culture without Barriers** programme. In cooperation with the Union of the Disabled, the city arranged for barrier-free access to the City Museum and the chateau, where a unique **step-climbing device** has been installed.

Ondrej Brdicko, Deputy Mayor of the Healthy City of **Karvina**, reported about the **Little House without Barriers** project to build an elevator at the Social Care Institute – The House in the Alley, completed in 2003.

Recognised for its systematic approach to improving the living



Students in the Healthy City of Chrudim had a first-hand experience with how vision-impaired citizens perceive the world; a common obstacle, such as stairs, is not easy to overcome – not even with a stick and a seeing-eye dog.

conditions for the disabled, the Healthy Region of **Vysocina** introduced its **Barrier-Free Vysocina** project, co-financed from EU funds as part of the Prelude programme (see below for details of the project).

Details about the seminar, presentations for downloading, etc. are available at <http://www.nszm.cz/bezbarierovost>.

BEST PRACTICE

Best Barrier-Free Practice from Healthy Cities

Healthy Cities provide barrier-free access to buildings in public areas for their disabled citizens.

The Healthy City of **Prostejov** already has so many barrier-free pavements and other barrier-free facilities that its officials decided to mark the barrier-free routes in the city map. Owing to **Prostejov Paraplegics**, a civic association, and the **Prostejov Centre for the Disabled**, two thousand copies of the **Barrier-Free Map of Prostejov** were published; in addition, Michaela Kolbova, Head of the Centre for the Disabled, made a list of barrier-free buildings. It is now easier for paraplegics and otherwise disabled citizens to move around the city owing to the increasing number of low-platform buses. As part of **Barrier-Free Vysocina**, the policlinic in the Healthy City of **Telc** was made barrier-free. In addition to internal modifications, the policlinic will now have a parking place for immobile persons. As a follow-up on the European Mobility Week campaign, the Healthy City of **Letovice** built barrier-free pavements in the city centre in 2004 and 2005. During 2006, a project will be completed to create a barrier-free route to enable all groups of citizens to move freely and safely throughout the region. The Healthy City of **Hodonin** joined the National Mobility for All Development Programme with

its **Barrier-Free Hodonin** project. The project maps the current barrier-free modifications and accessibility of public buildings to persons with limited mobility and orientation ability, using the outcomes to work out a barrier-free route that would connect all major authorities, institutions, schools as well as cultural, health and social facilities. Owing to **Travelling through the City Barrier-Free**, a workshop organised by the Special Elementary School in the Healthy City of **Usti nad Labem**, local paraplegics now hope to see a speedy completion of the guidance system in the city hall building. The community project entitled **Brno without Barriers** aims to improve conditions for independent mobility of citizens with limited mobility; apart from disabled people, this group includes pregnant women, children under three years of age and senior citizens. The Healthy City of **Kromeriz** has been modernising its fleet of public transport buses to enable barrier-free movement around the city. In addition to new vehicles equipped with a modern assistance and information system, the current services will be expanded to include an assistance service for people who are unable to travel by public transport without the help of others. The Healthy City of **Steti** has been very resourceful in removing barriers limiting people's access to education and culture; in addition to having a barrier-free cultural centre, city swimming pool or sports stadium, Steti's barrier-free City Library offers free delivery of books to its disabled, old and ill readers.



Prostejov's low-platform Ecobuses with ascending ramps are particularly appreciated by paraplegics and mothers with prams. They also have acoustic signal devices helping vision-impaired people to find their way more easily. Last but not least, each Ecobus produces 8,200 kg less of pollutants per year compared to a regular bus – which is appreciated by everyone.

Disabled People Are Part of Day-to-Day Life in Healthy Cities

Organised by the Healthy City of **Usti nad Labem**, a workshop entitled **Travelling through the City Barrier-Free** was an example of successful integration of the disabled in the society. Secondary school students had an opportunity to meet disabled and ill children with whom they travelled through the city by barrier-free routes, learning the right ways of helping paraplegics and other disabled. The Healthy City of **Chrudim** has been successful in getting disabled citizens involved in cultural activities. The event entitled **World for All, or Between Us** included an exhibition of photographs by Jindrich Streit capturing disabled people, an adventure programme and a music festival featuring both healthy and disabled musicians from the region. One of the activities offered as part of the nationwide **Car Free Day** campaign was an opportunity for healthy people to try how vision-impaired citizens move around in traffic on a regular weekday. This year, the Healthy City of **Koprivnice** organises the jubilee **Butterfly 2006**, a festival

of works created by disabled children. The idea behind the festival is to present activities of children and youth with serious disability and facilitate their social integration. It has become a tradition for guests from Poland to take part in the festival. Just one year short of the jubilee are the **Nationwide Games of Disabled Children and Adults**. This year, sportsmen will come to Koprivnice for a javelin contest, an electric wheelchair slalom race, or archery. The **Agency for Supported Employment at the Diaconia of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren in the Healthy City of Litomerice** is a major supporter of disabled people's integration in the society. The agency assists people with complicated access to open labour market; most frequently, these are people with physical or mental disability.

Healthy Cities Provide Information on Social Services and Barrier-Free Access

Organisations defending the interests of disabled citizens inform the general public about their activities and about the services they provide. In the Healthy City of **Prostejov**, the Lipka civic association published a brochure entitled the **Guide to Social Services in Prostejov Region** and organised the **1st Municipal and Regional Conference of Social Services Providers** in February this year. The Healthy City of **Chrudim** prepared a catalogue of selected organisations active in the social area, with **Tyflocentrum Pardubice** then converting the catalogue into the audio format and distributing it to clients. The Healthy City of **Hodonin** participates in the **Community Planning of Social Services** project to help solve problems encountered by disabled citizens systemically with the participation of all groups concerned as well as organisations providing social services. The **Barrier-Free Vysocina** project also aims to build a reliable information platform providing updates



The disabled are able to ride a bicycle, some of them even being top-performance sportsmen. The picture shows "handbikers", who use their hands rather than their feet to ride their bicycles.

on the barrier-free access situation in the region. The information includes not only technical data concerning access to buildings (such as door width or the descent of access ramps), but also specific guidelines, including descriptions of various alternatives for overcoming barriers – calling the assistance service, side barrier-free access to buildings with barriers, etc. The database has been created in cooperation with disabled citizens and is available at www.kr-vysocina.cz/bezbarrier.



Some of above mentioned examples of good practice and many other activities from various areas you can also find in the Good practice examples Database at <http://www.nszm.cz/dobra-praxe>.

RESOURCES AND PROJECTS

Funding for Barrier-Removing Activities Comes from Various Sources

Most of the money in support of projects for a "barrier-free" society traditionally comes from various EU programmes and funds. The **Human Resources Development** operational programme, Measure 2.1, of the European Social Fund (ESF) promotes an active employment policy and strives to prevent social exclusion, which includes barrier-free projects. As part of this measure, funding can



be obtained for barrier analyses of workplaces, employer training or various other analyses, exclusive of investment projects. The latest calls for applications are available at <http://www.strukturalni-fondy.cz> or <http://www.esfcr.cz>. Similar activities receive funding as part of the **Joint Regional Operational Programme (JROP 3.2)**, which supports community planning, barrier-free analyses of traffic routes, or cultural and educational activities for immobile citizens (again, exclusive of investments). As this source is still far from being used up, the regions and the Ministry for Regional Development have been inviting viable projects to apply for financing in this area. Funding can also be obtained from individual **regions** as part of their grant programmes and funds (most of them have made the third, and final, call for projects), as well as from larger **cities**.

The **National Mobility Programme** addresses issues involving transportation and movement of persons, which includes the funding programme (details are available at http://www.nrzp.cz/index.php?path=9&Menu_path=mobility_all.txt). **Konto Bariery** (Barrier Account) of the Charter 77 Foundation is probably the best known project supporting disabled people (details are available at <http://www.bariery.cz>).

Community Initiative EQUAL in Usti nad Labem

The Usti nad Labem Community Working Centre – a consulting organisation has been implementing a three-year supranational project under the Community Initiative EQUAL, entitled Community Planning as Tool for Promoting Social Integration and Prevention of Social Exclusion of Disadvantaged Persons in Labour Market.

This project wants to make use of the long-term experience in community planning that Usti nad Labem has gained in working together with experts from Great Britain since 1996. The partners of the project have prepared a set of ten methodologies directed at developing the ability of municipalities to implement their community plans. According to Lenka Krbcova-Masinova, Director of the Centre, this set will help municipalities respond flexibly to the needs of persons heretofore disadvantaged in the labour market and communicate efficiently with labour authorities and potential employers. As part of the project, a special website on community planning of social services was launched in March: <http://www.komunitniplanovani.com>.

SPECIAL COLUMN: RECAP

Recapitulation of February HCCZ Seminar on Free Time of Children and Youth

On February 28, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Physical Training (MEYPT) hosted an HCCZ seminar on free time of children and youth. The seminar presented latest information on financing options for free-time activities as well as practical examples of HCCZ members' activities.

Deputy Minister of Education Vaclav Picl introduced a new programme for spending one's free time usefully; the so-called **interest education** is a tool for children and youth to spend their time actively while developing new knowledge and skills. Eva Bartonova of MEYPT presented practical information on various **financing options** for the projects using both Czech and foreign resources. She informed the participants about the recently established MEYPT National Institute of Children and Youth, which is intended



On the last day of February, a specialised seminar on the free time of children and youth took place under the auspices of Minister of Education Petra Buzkova. The seminar at the premises of the ministry was attended by nearly 60 participants from cities and municipalities, NGOs and other institutions.

to serve as a source of information and an intermediary between the ministry and NGOs. HCCZ Director Petr Svec then placed the topic within a wider context of the Healthy Cities Project and briefly summed up the various methods, methodological assistance and other services that HCCZ provides to its members. Representatives of the Healthy Cities of **Boskovice, Vsetin, Orlova** and **Moravská Třebova** then presented a wide range of activities they have been offering to their young citizens. **Duha**, a civic association of children and youth, and the **National Children and Youth Council** reported about how NGOs support young generation activities. Details are available at <http://www.nszm.cz/msmt>.

The Healthy City of Litomerice Uses the Results of HCCZ Media Analysis in Practice

The recently published analysis of the Healthy Cities, Municipalities and Regions media publicity inspired Petr Hermann, Deputy Mayor of Litomerice and HCP politician, to meet with representatives of various media in Litomerice region. In addition to presenting the results of the analysis, he took this opportunity to thank the journalists for cooperating with the city.

The February methodological seminar of HCP and LA21 politicians was devoted to **media publicity and promotion of the Healthy Cities Project** and **communication with the media**. What were the observations of one of the participants, Deputy Mayor of Litomerice Petr Hermann? *"I was so impressed with the seminar in Velke Mezirici that I decided to invite the journalists with whom we have been meeting throughout our term of office and present the analysis to them."* A month later, representatives of regional media, city officials and other guests met at the Litomerice city hall. Petr Hermann presented the results of the media publicity analysis and emphasized Litomerice's high ranking in the immediate effect information chart, that is, in providing information on specific benefits of HCP and LA21. The high ranking is all the more valuable for the fact that Litomerice does not have any press spokesperson, so the city officials communicate directly with the public and the media. *"Despite, or perhaps owing to, this fact, we feel that the city hall and the media cooperate exceptionally well, naturally with the journalists maintaining their independent views,"* explains Petr Hermann. His assessment of the event is very positive: *"What the participants said in the meeting, as well as the information published in the media, clearly indicate that the event was useful for both sides. I would like to note that at the meeting, we introduced the new logo of the Healthy City of Litomerice, which you can already find at the HCCZ website."* The unabridged version of the media publicity analysis is available at <http://www.nszm.cz/analiza>.

IN BRIEF

City Reflections

HCCZ

Owing to active cooperation between HCCZ and the Czech Ministry of Interior, municipalities implementing local Agenda 21 according to the official LA21 Criteria set can take part in this year's Ministry of Interior Sector Awards. Healthy Cities, Municipalities and Regions actively proceeding in accordance with LA21 Criteria can win the following awards:

- Organisation Increasing the Quality of Public Services ("bronze medal") – for meeting criteria in the "C" Category;
- Organisation of High-Quality Public Services ("silver medal") – for meeting criteria in the "B" or "A" Categories;
- Innovation Prize – for concurrent implementation of more methods (CAF, benchmarking, LA21, EMAS, etc.) with a documented added value in terms of innovation.

Details of LA21 Criteria, a practical guidebook to contributing the results to LA21 Database and other information are available at <http://www.nszm.cz/ma21>.

HCCZ

The series of regional seminars on **Drawing upon EU Funds**, co-organised by HCCZ and the Ministry for Regional Development, was concluded in Prague on March 13. The seminars focused on the sources of funding that can help solve problems in the social area and have not been used up yet due to a lack of projects (JROP 3.2). The seven meetings in the individual NUTS II regions were attended by over **300** people, mostly representatives of cities, municipalities, regions and NGOs. *"The series of seminars was designed to increase awareness of the currently available EU funding and the significance such finances have, and will have, for future development of cities, municipalities and regions throughout the Czech Republic. The meetings presented practical examples as well as information vital for the potential applicants,"* commented Radko Martinek, Minister for Regional Development. Details are available at <http://www.nszm.cz/seminare>.

WHO Czech Republic

The UN House in Prague hosted a preparatory meeting of experts from ministries, research institutes and teaching hospitals for the **National Days without Injuries** campaign. The working group agreed that the main topic of this year's campaign will be **Safe Journey to School** with an emphasis on **prevention of injuries to children**. The nationwide campaign will take place between June 1 and 11.

Letovice, Boskovice and Kurim Regions

The above three Healthy Cities and their respective regions hosted a series of meetings with local politicians, NGOs, entrepreneurs and citizens on the priorities of the regions and their project plans. In the near future, the same procedure will be applied in the **Hodonin** region. The project was designed to inform cities, municipalities and regions about the various financing options and to collect a sufficient number of high-quality draft projects. Altogether, over **300 people** attended the meetings, and over **220 new draft projects** were collected; the drafts are now available in the **publicly accessible database** on the Internet (<http://www.nszm.cz/jmk/dataplan>), where you can also contribute new projects.

Vsetin

Vsetin is the first Healthy City to have become involved in **Citizen's Charter**, a pilot project of Sigma (OECD) and the Czech Ministry of Interior. The Charter is to help the authorities and institutions providing public services better understand the needs of their "clients", that is, citizens, respond to their expectations and work more efficiently by, for instance, making it easier for citizens to obtain the information they need. Detailed information and applications for the project are available at zmeskal@mvcz.cz; milan.pucek@mestovsetin.cz.

Usti nad Labem

Under the auspices of Tomas Jelinek, Deputy Mayor and HCP and LA21 politician, five kindergartens in Usti nad Labem will run a programme entitled We Are Going to Have Guests as part of the **Five Keys to Safe Boarding**. The project of the Institute of Agricultural and Food Information aims to raise awareness and help develop healthy eating habits in little children in kindergartens. Usti nad Labem is the first place outside the capital Prague to introduce this programme and, if successful, to expand it. The project forms a part of the City Health Development Plan and is subsidised from the grant programme of the Healthy City of Usti nad Labem.

Calendar of Events

April 4 – Another **Safe School Conference** to follow up on the successful event last year will be held in the great hall of the Secondary Medical School in the Healthy City of **Kromeriz**. The agenda and application form are available at <http://www.mesto-kromeriz.cz/bezpecna-skola>.

April 11 to 12 – The Healthy City of **Brno** will host **Community Cooperation relating to Drug Abuse**, a two-day conference organised by the Helping Hand Association, I.E.S. Educational Centre. The main topic will be the **Possibilities for Drug User Participation in Labour Market**. Details are available at <http://www.podaneruce.cz>.

April 19 – The Healthy City of **Vsetin** will host an **MCAP** session on **Environmentally Responsible Operations of Authorities**. The meeting will focus on the using of services, materials and equipment of the authorities that are friendly to the environment.

April 22 – On this day, the 37th **Earth Day** will be celebrated worldwide. Last year, **25 Healthy Cities and Municipalities** joined the campaign to protect our planet's environment. We trust that the number of participants will be even greater this year. In this connection, HCCZ and the Partnership Foundation have invited HCCZ members to participate in the **Tree of the Year** competition for the most beautiful tree in a city, municipality or region. Details are available at <http://www.nszm.cz/programy> (area: environment).

April 25 – Energie-Cités and HCCZ together with Porsenna, o.p.s. organise the **BISE Forum** in Hradec Kralove, an international seminar on **municipal power engineering, energy management** and exchange of best practice. Details are available at <http://www.nszm.cz/bise>.

April 26 – **Methods of Quality in Public Administration** is a seminar organised by HCCZ in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior under the auspices of Minister of Interior Frantisek Bublan. The seminar is primarily intended for city authorities' officials, secretaries and directors. Details are available at <http://www.nszm.cz/mv>.

All website references are generally in Czech language

OUR NEXT TOPIC

The topic of the month for April will be Eco – procurement.

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