



HEALTHY CITIES OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

INTERVIEW



**An interview with
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Head of Centre
for Urban Health, World
Health Organisation
in Europe**

The meeting in Prague was productive and pleasant

WHO HCP Advisory Committee held a meeting in Prague. Please, can you describe the main tasks of this committee?

With such large international networks of WHO Healthy Cities and national networks it is very difficult to communicate with all participants throughout the year. This is why this committee has been appointed. Its members are voted by WHO HCP members and meet two to three times a year. Its main purpose is to discuss and agree on issues relating to the content and organisation of the annual business and technical conferences as well as strategic and technical issues relating to the implementation of the Healthy Cities goals in Europe.

What was the content of this Prague meeting?

It was a very important meeting, mainly for two reasons. First, we reviewed the WHO HCP development for the past five years (Phase IV) and discussed the concept of and approach to the Phase IV evaluation. We addressed both the technical and political aspects of the Healthy Cities movement's activities. We also discussed how to make the best use of the great experiences of our members in the whole range of cutting edge public health issues. Another important issue was to discuss alternative strategies for the further development of Healthy Cities in Europe beyond the year 2008. We dealt in particular with the issue of expectations from the part of politicians – representatives of cities, municipalities, regions – and spoke about public health issues on whose solution the Healthy Cities should concentrate in the future.

Another annual meeting of Healthy Cities and their networks will take place in the French Rennes in the autumn. Do you know the main subject of the Rennes conference already?

Preparation of the conference was one of important points of the Prague meeting. This time we decided to focus on two major subjects that we would like to debate with our members. The first one is basically the future outlook of cities and how to

cope with the big problems of today – social exclusion of certain groups of inhabitants, migration, poverty, equality of opportunities in connection to education, employment and access to health services etc. Another main subject will be the role of local “leaders” in contributing to health and sustainable development. What they can do in this respect themselves to achieve tangible changes.

Completion on page 2.

TOPIC OF THE MONTH: “NON-SMOKING PUBLIC AREAS”

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), diseases caused by smoking are the second most frequent cause of death worldwide. 5 million smokers die prematurely in the world each year and in case of continuing current trend, this alarming number might even rise up to double value by 2020, i.e. to 10 million of premature deaths related to smoking. In the Czech Republic the diseases connected to smoking cause 18 000 casualties annually, among whose there is a rising number of non-smokers due to diseases caused by passive smoking. In particular the people working in restaurants and in similar workplaces are exposed to effects of cigarette smoke harmful to health. These facilities not only threaten the health of guests but also that of their employees. The children in families where some parent smokes also



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Topic: Nonsmoking Environment



become involuntary passive smokers. It is important to note that the effects of passive smoking on human organism are comparable to those of illnesses caused by active smoking. And precisely to the protection of non-smokers against the effects of cigarette smoke has been dedicated this year's campaign Tobacco Free Day, whose main subject was this time the "Non-Smoking Public Areas". Examples from the countries where non-smoking public areas have been legislated show that legislative change in favour of non-smokers in the end contributes to all inhabitants including restaurant owners and smokers themselves, who in the end reduce the cigarette consumption. The May Bulletin issue among others brings information about events in the Healthy Cities, Municipalities and Regions that joined this year's international Tobacco Free Day Campaign.

The meeting in Prague was productive and pleasant

Completion from page 1.

Do you evaluate the Prague meeting positively, then?

The programme was really busy. We had a unique opportunity to find out more about local approaches. We listened to a very impressive presentation by the Prague councillor Dr. Štěpánek about the situation in Prague and in particular current approaches to environmental manage-



Representatives from a total of nine countries that participate in the international Healthy City Project WHO held a three-day meeting in Prague. The programme of steering committee among others contained a meeting with representatives of Ministry for Local development and Prague municipal council. Sitting at the head of table (from the left), the new HCCZ chairman Petr Řezníček, HCP WHO director Agis Tsouros, WHO CZ office director Alena Šteflová and HCCZ director Petr Švec. The participants were welcomed by the 1st deputy minister for local development Milan Půček.

ment, transport and urban development. I am pleased that the City of Prague is considering its participation in the WHO HCP, which would be a significant shift not only within the CZ framework but also in the European context. We were also pleased that the Healthy Cities of the Czech Republic focus on the promotion of long-term visions for the quality of life, sustainable development, transportation etc., as this is exactly the essence of the WHO Healthy City Project – i.e. not only to deal with problems of today but also search for emerging challenges and opportunities in the future and think about the way we wish our cities to look like tomorrow. The meeting attended by representatives of Norway, Great Britain, Italy, Israel, Slovenia, Poland, Croatia, Turkey and the Czech Republic, was very pleasant and productive.

What words would you send to Czech Healthy Cities, Municipalities and Regions?

The Healthy Cities of the Czech Republic belong among the three best networks in Europe. You have proven to do a good job and work consistently and systematically. I was in particular captured by your way of interconnecting international UN, EU or WHO agendas and bringing it all the way to the level of national, regional and local governments. I was also very encouraged by the fact that you have formed strong part-

nerships with the Ministries of Health, Interior and other central government institutions. You have done a remarkable job indeed and you have shown a way of how to support your members on the local and regional level as well as on the national and international levels. I believe that others will also learn from your good experience.

THE PUBLIC AREAS IN THE WHOLE EUROPEAN UNION ARE GOING TO BE NON-SMOKING, THE MAJORITY OF CITIZENS SUPPORTS ANTI-SMOKING MEASURES

The previous practice in the countries that had already adopted legal measures for protection of non-smokers have proven the usefulness of course of action selected, therefore, all public areas including restaurants of the whole European Union should become non-smoking at the latest in 2009. The campaigns for support of non-smoking areas supported by releasing of manifests and publications are under way over the whole Europe, broad public debate has been accompanying the gradual introduction of anti-smoking measures in the Czech Republic.

On the occasion of World Tobacco Free Day (May 31st), the EU commissioner responsible for the public health issue Markos Kyprianou introduced the results of new **Euro-Barometer dedicated to the smoking issue** in the European Parliament. The Euro-Barometer has shown that the majority of Europeans agree with anti-smoking measures. Non-smoking offices, other workplaces inside buildings and public areas are even supported by 88% of citizens, which is even more than last year. The manifesto of European youth "Young People: For Life without Smoking" has been also introduced in the European Parliament: At the beginning of 2007 the European Committee adopted the Green Book **"For Europe without Cigarette Smoke: possible activities on the EU level"**, whose Czech version can be downloaded at the page http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/Tobacco/Documents/gp_smoke_cs.pdf.

In the meanwhile, individual European countries continue in reduction of smoking in public areas. In Ireland they already have a four-year experience with anti-smoking measures, strict measures have been recently also adopted in Finland, France and Northern Ireland, reduction of smoking is about to take place in Portugal and Germany. The examples of countries that had already introduced anti-smoking measures show that these measures have a clearly positive impact on economy and in particular bring advantages to employers. According to the World Labour Organisation there are **200 thousand deaths among workers** due to effects of passive smoking. Also for this reason the World Health Organisation (WHO) this year issued a publication **Protection from Exposure to Second-hand Tobacco Smoke** that contains a number of recommendations – legislative, technical and others – that should reduce the negative impacts of passive smoking (available at http://www.who.int/tobacco/resources/publications/wntd/2007/pol_recommendations/en/index.html).

Economic losses can be naturally registered solely by the tobacco industry, whose representatives perceive the current measures as a threat. Cigarette producers focus their long-term advertising activities on children who create the main target group of potential all-life addicted customers. An epidemic of children's smoking – the expression *epidemic* is quite appropriate as smoking is considered by experts a disease with its own diagnosis – it has its causes as well in imitation of attractive heroes from commercials, quite often made a part of movies. Among the smokers of the Czech Republic the major share consists of young people between 15 and 18 years of age.

Antismoking educational activities gradually focus mainly on smoking prevention and protection of non-smokers

The preventive activities by organisations specialised in anti-smoking education are dedicated precisely to the most threatened group of potential smokers from the ranks of children. The initiative called **Chain of Love to Children** systematically deals with roots of children's smoking epidemic and under the support of famous personalities, such as actor Tomáš Hanák, spreads the facts about children's and youth tobacco addiction issues among the public. Both the youth and adults are assisted in the process of giving up smoking by the Centres of Tobacco Addiction Therapy that operate in large hospitals or by various consultation centres for overcoming smoking. This year's issue of Tobacco Free Day, i.e. "Non-smoking Public Areas" have been also dealt with in the projects of the **World Health Organisation** realised in the area of the Czech Republic. In its activities WHO collaborates with famous organisations such as **League against Cancer** or **Czech Coalition against Tobacco**. The WHO supports and as such also organises expert meetings. „On the May 15th there was a seminar held in the CZ Senate called *Non-smoking Environment – Basic Human Right where we not only analysed the political aspects of non-smoking public areas but also the legal points of view, for instance the employee's right for non-smoking working environment and economic impacts of smoking. Less pleasant facts could be also heard on the seminar. The Czech Republic is well known for its political environment influenced by tobacco companies. For this reason we consequently miss interesting grants,*” notes MUDr. Alena Šteflová of the Czech WHO office. Legislation of non-smoking public areas, among others required by "**Petition for Non-smoking Areas in the CR**" organised by the Czech Coalition against Smoking, corresponds with the trend leading to non-smoking Europe.



IN THE COURSE OF TOBACCO FREE DAY CAMPAIGN THE HEALTHY CITIES FOCUSED ON PREVENTION, OVERCOMING OF THE SMOKING ADDICTION AND PREVENTION OF NON-SMOKERS

The Tobacco Free Day Campaign informs citizens regularly about the risks related to smoking Educational events this time in accordance with the subject of this year's campaign emphasised the importance of non-smoking public areas.

As an example that should contribute the healthy way of life and protect the rights of non-smokers may serve the decision of representatives of the Healthy City of **Brno** to condition effective from this year the allocation of municipal budget subsidies for cultural events by provision of **non-smoking environment for visitors** from the part of its organisers. On the occasion of the Tobacco Free Day there was an information campaign intended for all workers of the municipal office in the Healthy City of **Uherský Brod**. Appropriate identification of buildings and individual workplaces has been also checked in the course of the event. Municipal Police patrols then performed checks in municipal public transport stops and in catering facilities which should have dedicated and duly identified areas for non-smokers. Programme



The all-day programme in Brno Zoological Garden called "Animals Do Not Smoke Either" also belonged among the largest events organised by the Healthy Cities and Municipalities on the occasion of the Tobacco Free day. The event was enjoyed by both children and parents.

of the Tobacco Free Day in the Healthy City of **Třebíč** has been dedicated to the issue of children's passive smoking. Workers of Třebíč's centre together with children organised a public enquire titled "**Mummy, Daddy, Why Do You Smoke?**" that took place in the daily centre and in other clubs and using questionnaires it was to find out information about percentage of smoking parents. Non-smoking parents received a small gift, smoking parents on the contrary received an "anti-gift". Ageus Třebíč Association organised a meeting in the "Forward!" Club dedicated to harmfulness of smoking with Dr. Karel Janíček on the subject of "New Life Without Tobacco – The Way Smoking and Use of Drugs During Pregnancy Influences the Future Child Born". Information about the issue of smoking were offered to visitors of the **Health Kiosk** on Ressel Square in the Healthy City of **Chrudim**. The regional hygiene station in Pardubice introduced a guidance centre for overcoming smoking that also offered to its visitors a possibility to have the amount of carbon monoxide in lungs measured by Smokerlyzer apparatus. The values measured with smokers are many times higher than those of non-smokers and according to measured values it was possible to estimate the number of cigarettes smoked per day. Non-smokers could instead verify whether they were exposed to effects of passive smok-



On 26.5., up to 140 of Chrudim's inhabitants set forth for the annual fresh air hike to Sněžka hill. At 13 o'clock at its summit they met the expeditions from the Ministry of Health and WHO.

ing in the last hours. Children were dissuaded from smoking by the smoking doll Susanne, present at the kiosk. Visitors of the Health Kiosk could also sign a **petition for prohibition of smoking in public areas** supported by the Czech Health Chamber.

Health guidance centres help people to quit smoking not only in the course of Tobacco Free Day Campaign

The Healthy City of **Hodonín** in collaboration with Medical Institute seated in Brno, Centre SOUTH and House of Health Pharmacy organised in the

area of local Municipal Office a public lecture called "How to Quit Smoking" with subtitle "Methods, Possibilities and Experiences". In the course of ensuing programme the attendants were familiarised with newest programmes for gradual overcoming of smoking using a substitute nicotine therapy and three-phase homeopathy approach. In the Healthy City of **Ústí nad Labem** the competition "Quit and Win" culminated on the occasion of the Tobacco Free Day. The prize has been handed over to a drawn winner who has just like other finalists proven that she managed not to smoke for a period of one month. The Medical Institute seated in Ústí nad Labem was a partner to this anti-smoking competition. Within the framework of the Tobacco Free day Campaign in the Healthy City of **Litoměřice** there has been a contribution from consulting rooms of lung doctors' made and broadcasted by the regional cable television. Pupils of Litomeřice basic schools had a chance to participate in unconventional competition based in making a short movie according to their own scenario, pointing at negative aspects of smoking. The contributions have been broadcasted on the cable TV and released on internet pages <http://www.litomericko24.cz>. The



A medially very rewarding part of the Tobacco and Alcohol Free Day programme in Vsetín were repeated walks through the City, attended by pupils of basic schools and members of the Children's Parliament.

also undertaken in the Healthy City of **Blansko**. The route led from Blansko to the nearby municipality of Hořice. The inhabitants of the Healthy City of **Vsetín** had a chance to take part in the Fresh Air Trip to Vsacký Cáb directly during the Tobacco Free Day. The celebrations of the Alcohol Free Day took place in the city a day before. The Healthy City of **Orlová** organised a climb on Velká Čantoryje in cooperation with the Healthy City of **Karviná**, "Child and Atmosphere" Endowment Fund, Czech Red Cross Karviná, Medical High School Karviná and Medical Institute Ostrava. On the mountain top there was an accompanying programme with medical theme prepared for the participants, pedestrians or cyclists. A cycling trip called "To the Museum on Bike" has been prepared for its inhabitants by the Healthy City of **Letovice**. A total number of 60 participants of all age groups set on a bike trip into the newly opened museum in Horní Smržov, where after the sporting performance they could see an exposition situated in the traditional folk dwellings. A Fresh Air Trip has been also organised by the Healthy City of **Třebíč** in collaboration with Gymnastic Union Třebíč, in a form of ascent on Třebíč Tower. Participants of organised climb could decode a cipher hidden on the tower gallery and obtain a small souvenir dedicated to the event that supported the idea of healthy lifestyle without tobacco.

The following HCCZ member cities and municipalities this year applied for campaign support: **Brno, Blansko, České Budějovice, Hodonín, Chrudim, Letovice, Litoměřice, Orlová, Třebíč, Uherský Brod, Ústí nad Labem, Vsetín.**



Among the traditional events held on the occasion of the Tobacco Free Day belongs measurement of blood values, such as was the case this year in Hodonín.

authors of the best video were rewarded by prizes donated by the City of Litoměřice and cable television. Visitors of the **VZP Health Kiosk** in the Healthy City of Brno were given advice concerning oncological diseases prevention by experts of League against Cancer, there was also a **School of Overcoming Smoking** prepared for those interested.

The Tobacco Free Day in the Healthy Cities has been accompanied by sports and other entertainment events

A traditional part of the Tobacco Free Day consists of "Fresh Air Trips" that should emphasise the importance of active exercise without tobacco for healthy lifestyle and physical shape. The Healthy City of **Chrudim** together with Club of Czech Tourists organised the traditional hike on Sněžka. Up to 140 Chrudim's inhabitants headed by the HCCZ chairman and city vice-mayor Mr. Petr Řezníček set out on a journey on Saturday May 26th 2007. At the top of the highest Czech mountain the Chrudim inhabitants met the expeditions from CZ Ministry of Health and World Health Organisation. On Sněžka a handover of commemorative sheets with special stamp and common summit photographing took place. The trip for fresh air has been

Database BEST PRACTICE

Examples of best practice from other areas can be found in Database BestPractice - <http://www.dobrapraxe.cz>.

Interesting information about the partners and financial resources related to the issue of smoking prevention and best practice of Healthy Cities, Municipalities and Regions in this field can be also found in last year's issue of May HCCZ Bulletin at the address <http://www.nszm.cz/zprav>.

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



This issue was supported by the European Social Fund and the Czech Ministry of Environment