



CASE STUDY



“Prague shared and divided” – Promoting the multicultural history of Prague

“Prague Shared and Divided” challenges the commonly held view of Prague as a city of a single nation. Prague is shown as a city shared by Czech- and German-speaking people whose fragile identities were not defined by space only, but rather by their language, the time they lived in, the political context, by prejudice and stereotypes. Such moveable everyday boundaries of shared and divided identities, which became more visible and of consequence during the time of World War II and the Holocaust, can be traced on our internet memory map and discovered during our guided tours through the city. Prague did not, however, become a static homogeneous place after World War II. After the expulsion of Prague Germans, new inhabitants came here, including for example Slovak Roma. The project is an open platform comprising contributions from experts from various fields, secondary school and university students from both the Czech Republic and abroad. Based on interviews with eyewitnesses, archive research of texts and audiovisual materials, we have created a historical mosaic of a multicultural city.



The Multicultural Centre Prague (MKC Prague) is a non-profit organisation engaged in the pursuit of educational and research activities in the fields of international migration, social inclusion of Roma and global development. Founded in 1999, it strives for a Czech society based on respect for human rights, intercultural tolerance and understanding and political equality.







SHORT SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

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DESCRIPTION OF YOUR ORGANISATION

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PROJECT

What are the local social realities?

All European countries are now dealing with growing xenophobia and hatred focused especially on refugees. At the same time nationalist and conservative movements are getting stronger. In the Czech Republic the numbers of refugees crossing our borders is miniscule, yet strong xenophobic movements can be found in the country, such as "We do not want Islam in the Czech Republic" as well as parties with an anti-immigrant agenda. Some social networks, blogs and websites spread an atmosphere of fear, hatred and prejudice that affect all the population of the Czech Republic.

What are the specific innovative elements in your project/service?

Project "Prague Shared and Divided" started in 2013. Its main goal is to present and promote a multicultural history of Prague to schools and the general public. At the beginning of the project a map of the Prague city centre, which included historic sites connected to the persecution of Jews, stories of refugees from Nazi-Germany and collaboration during the Nazi occupation of Prague was printed. Maps were distributed to libraries,





schools or tourist information centres. At the same time a website application was created – an interactive map of Prague at www.praha.mkc.cz. Each point on the map contains a description of the history of each place, often accompanied by historical photos, videos or the testimonies of witnesses. Over time further topics were added – Russian émigrés in interwar Czechoslovakia, cafés as important political and social meeting points, the music of ethnic minorities etc.

From the beginning of the project guided tours on the multicultural history of Prague have taken place. In each tour there were over 15 to 30 participants. Tours are accompanied by a reading of eye-witnesses’ memories or historical photos. The topics of the guided tours match the topics on the interactive map. Another successful activity is the screening of historical films with commentary by historians.

The project has also focused on work with schools. Pupils in the higher years of elementary school and high school students cooperated with us throughout their school projects on several topics on the interactive map. In June 2016 a new educational programme for high schools was launched (in cooperation with The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes), which uses the concept of interactive guided tours (using tablets to read and analyse historical texts and pictures). This programme is about the city’s reception of refugees from Nazi Germany in the 1930s, and parallels with the situation of refugees today.

Project “Prague shared and divided” is unique precisely for this connection between local communities, local history and intercultural education.

What are the key characteristics of the project/service?

Target groups

Schools and the general public;

Principles

Promoting the historical experience of the coexistence of various ethnic and religious groups in Prague and the stories of war refugees;

Drivers

Challenging the commonly held view of Prague as a city of a single nation; the need to understand the current situation of refugees and cultural diversities in society to tackle growing xenophobia and hatred focused especially on refugees;

Outcome

Local history, local community activities, creating a relationship with the current local minorities.

The project fosters participants’ interest in the history of where they live. Remembering the past coexistence of various religious and ethnic minorities is helpful in creating a relationship with current minorities.

Can this project be transferred to a larger context (a bigger region, the whole country, EU-wide)? If so, what is necessary to transfer it (special structures, finances, common definition of standards...)? If not, why not?

The project could be transferred to a larger context. We have tried to look already for historical connections between Prague and other Central and Eastern European towns who have partnered with us in the project. We have found it useful to focus on the “multicultural” histories of Prague in the broad sense, including various minorities, social and political struggles.





The project cooperates with partners from Czech Republic and also from abroad. In the Czech Republic our partners deal with topics of ethnic minorities, Jewish history or the history of persecution. The partners are: The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, Malach Centre for Visual History, Czech-German Future Fund, Czech branch of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung etc. Partners abroad at the beginning of the project were: the Vienna Project, Rejs e.V. in Berlin, Adalbert Stifter Verein e.V. in Munich, Nadácia Milana Šimečku in Bratislava and Stowarzyszenie "Pracownia Etnograficzna" in Warsaw (see its memory map of Warsaw at <http://warszawa.etnograficzna.pl/>).

CONTACT

<http://praha.mkc.cz>

Zuzana Schreiberová

Email: zuzana.schreiberova@mkc.cz

Tel: +42 0296325345





solidar

Rue de Pascale 4-6
1040 Brussels
Belgium
T +32 2 500 10 20
F +32 2 500 10 30

Twitter: @SOLIDAR_EU
Facebook: SOLIDAR
www.solidar.org
solidar@solidar.org



SOLIDAR, together with our national members and partners, has developed 17 case studies in 2016, presenting innovative, effective, sustainable and tailor made models to promote social inclusion, the social economy and quality job creation by adapting a social investment approach. In their daily work, SOLIDAR members and partners anticipate new or unmet needs of socio-economically vulnerable people and empower them to actively participate in society and to access the labour market.

These case studies gather strong evidence of the social impact of the activities undertaken by our members and partners to help Member States making progress towards the achievement of the social and employment objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the implementation of the Social Investment Package.

SOLIDAR is a European network of membership based Civil Society Organisations who gather several millions of citizens throughout Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR voices the values of its member organisations to the EU and international institutions across the three main policy sectors; social affairs, lifelong learning and international cooperation.



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