

The project « Back to Beginning » was funded with the support of the European Union under the Programme "Europe for Citizens"

Applicable to the Strand 2 – Measure 2.1 *"Town-Twinning"*

Participation: The project involved 745 citizens, notably 600 participants from the city of Dlhá nad Váhom (**Slovakia**), 75 participants from the city of Jílovice (**Czech Republic**), 70 participants from the city of Babarc (**Hungary**).

Location/ Dates: The event took place in Dlhá nad Váhom (**Slovakia**), from 20/09/2014 to 21/09/2014.

Short description:

In the morning of 20/09/2014 the event was publicly and ceremonially opened. Here the detailed description of the program was realized, which was followed by the speeches of the partners. Since the partners are our regularly returning guests, in their presentation speeches they mostly informed about their activities and changes that affect them since the last meeting. Through joint activities they informed about their relationship to the Union, about changes in the life of self-governments and individual organizations since the time of integration to the EU. The discussion also served the goal of drawing the attention of interested citizens to the phenomena that were not part of everyday life before the EU membership. These include for example. freedom of movement and the right to work, the expansion of learning opportunities, easier cultivation of international relations and greater citizen participation in the decision-making mechanisms.

At 11 a.m. the harvest-related events and competitions started, providing opportunities to participate for all age groups. Young people competed in drinking must, the older ones in drinking new wine, and could also participate in other competitions connected with the harvest atmosphere.

In the afternoon the joint programs started with history. The partnership recalled the events of World War I, its consequences for the different countries and municipalities. In this context, citizens representing the individual municipalities let the interested public into the centuries of their own villages as well.

This information offered now interfaces and promoted a better understanding of history and of the current situation as well. This was followed by the signing of the partnership agreement, which was the result of joint activities so far. It carries a very positive message for the future, so the partnership becomes stronger and more determined, it will be able to implement new ideas and challenges.

The competitions also continued, allowing more and more adults and seniors to participate after the end of the work hours. Preparation of traditional local foods began, which has a long tradition in the course of international meetings. This was another opportunity for the foreigners to learn about the unique world and a segment of traditions of the hosts. The evening concert served quality entertainment, and also reflected cultural diversity. Besides home participants the partner groups also performed, thus, their creative activities they introduced themselves to each other and to the audience. Plenty of new friendships were established and old ties deepened thanks to the rich cultural experiences

Besides the main activities rich accompanying programs were waiting for the visitors. In the frame of a lecture they gained practical information of wine-making and viticulture, which also provided insights into the ancient practices of wine-growing, as well as into present developments. The exhibition presenting former viticulture and wine accessories was a tribute to the experience of our ancestors. The exhibited objects represented a priceless value, they are rarely used nowadays and the younger generation can only get to know them on special occasions.

At the following non-formal conversation the participants familiarized with project application and implementation opportunities. Here, in addition to useful information the already implemented projects were also presented as the partnership boasts a number of good examples in this regard.

On 09/21/2014 we revived our history by a wreath-laying ceremony. Within a short program we honored the fallen heroes of the World Wars, who gave their lives to the welfare of future generations.

The continuing competitions again involved many people thanks to the funny tasks they produced a huge success. The competitions were closed by the announcement of results, which showed that the partners have skilled, clever and persistent citizens applying unique approaches, regardless of citizenship, language or nationality.

The drama presented by amateur actors was a great success, partly due to the enthusiasm of actors, partly due to the humorous nature of the piece. The self-government has been in good relationship with this volunteer group for many years, they usually perform in local celebrations. The good atmosphere was intensified by the joint procession through the streets of the village. Allegorical, vintage couches and carts were passing through between the rows of houses, in front of which the vine-dressers offered a taste from the local wine harvest. So there was opportunity to compare the products of individual cellars and try the small savories and sweet pastries offered besides them. The cultural experience was provided by live gypsy music, humor was ensured by costumed, volunteer actors presenting parody scenes. Music entertainment continued throughout the night, which provided an opportunity to the audience to sing along with the singers on the stage. Music and singing created an intimate, friendly atmosphere and produced consistency and high spirits in the participants.

On this day again, an accompanying program awaited the visitors, which was implemented in view of the schedule of the main program. The partners reported about their plans and activities implemented in the past few years and months at an open board meeting. Here ordinary visitors could tell their opinions and received relevant answers to their questions from those competent. They also participated in the joint brainstorming of ideas, the theme of which was the future of the partnership. Active citizens could express their demands, what were they interested in, how they could imagine the closer cooperation. Playful activities were prepared for children and youth, those who wanted to move could live up their energy in the bouncy castle. Through the EU forum with a direct and friendly atmosphere attention was again focused on the EU. By the participation of guests from different countries a diverse conversation emerged conveying many lessons, observing a lot of interesting topics. These include for example migration of young people after work, the situation of family farms in individual countries, preservation of national identity within the European Union and a more thorough understanding of the EU rights. All of this knowledge was made complete by the information materials, which were provided for the visitors for free. These publications included practical knowledge related to consumer protection, staying abroad or the operation of the EP etc.