

The project « Heart of Partnership » 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 615 citizens, notably 500 participants from the town of Veľký Grob (Slovakia), 40 participants from the town of Kostelec (Czech republic), 40 participants from the town of Tulghes (Romania) and 35 participants from the town of Rekovac (Serbia)

Location/ Dates: The event took place in Veľký Grob (Slovakia), from 22/08/2014 to 24/08/2014

Short description:

The day of 22/08/2014 was dedicated to mutual familiarization and exploring areas which the project wants to focus on. The citizens of the partner municipalities met in such a great number for the first time, therefore, with the exception of municipal representatives there were no friendly bonds among them. The official welcome was determined to traditional products - Veľký Grob wine. After the welcoming ceremony the guests had the opportunity to get to know the home village. The mayor of the village accompanied the guests to significant local objects and sights. Thanks to this the foreign guests had the opportunity to get to know the home municipality on a larger scale. During the visit to the local primary school an exhibition of children's work on the topic of "The European Union and My Country" was opened. The exhibition was compiled of the drawings of children from the partner municipalities and was open throughout the event. After the completion of the survey the participants had the opportunity to get to know the EU. Within the European Forum at first they discovered the fundamental principles of the functioning and existence of the EU and subsequently discussed current European issues, the future of Europe and civic participation in EU structures. After the end of the discussion, the guests moved into the main auditorium of the community center where within a festive reception the new partnership agreement with the municipality of Kostelec from the Czech Republic was signed. The partnership declarations with Rekovac and Tulghes municipalities were signed before the event. The evening program offered organ concerts and visiting the local wineries, supporting the establishment of friendly relations between the participants.

The day of 23/08/2014 was dedicated to cultural and social activities were fully developed, requiring the active participation of home people and foreign guests as well. The day started with learning about the EU through promotional materials. Within the information stall the basic principles of the operation of the EU and its policies were presented. For the youngest participants a theatre performance about Captain Kotvička was prepared. The main character showed the children the basics of proper management of a ship in a witty way. Children were included into the action interactively when answering questions and solving problems with the captain. Meanwhile, municipal representatives along with representatives of the civil sector negotiated and discussed problems of individual municipalities, of new international cooperation and about utilizing the know-how of partners for the benefit of other municipalities. The meeting was beneficial for all participants, since it provided new dimension and meaning to the partnership. Support of the integration efforts of Serbia was helped by the activity "Our life in the Union". The participants discussed what the membership in the EU gave them and what benefits it provides to municipalities. The representatives of Rekovac municipality of Serbia thus gained a better understanding about the life of municipalities in the EU. Besides discussions the program also contained exploring the traditions of the partner municipalities. First, it was getting to know and tasting traditional dishes from the partner municipalities, which was followed by an exhibition of embroidery, folk costumes and artifacts of daily life in the past. Here the participants had the opportunity to learn about the lives of our ancestors. The early evening was devoted to culture and entertainment, which contributed to building mutual relations. These were the activities of Ceremonial divine service, Heart of the Partnership - cultural zone of folklore groups of the partner countries and the Dance House. Due to a large torrential downpour all afternoon activities took place in interiors - in the community centre.

The day of 24/08/2014 was dedicated to sports and leisure activities. The foreign guests spent the morning visiting the capital of Slovakia - Bratislava. Together they viewed the historic center and castle. The afternoon was devoted to sport. Children took part in a football tournament, adults and seniors in quizzes and fun games. These activities helped strengthen new relationships and camaraderie among the participants. Seniors also joined the program in the form of joint sitting and discussions on topics related to old age and European citizenship. They spoke about how the new partnership and European citizenship allow them to exchange contacts, visits and the like. One of the last activities was the creation of the Veľký Grob postcards. It was produced by younger participants. It was compiled by experiences of the event (photos, newspaper cuttings, subscriber cards, etc.). It is a symbolic link of the project, the villages and their inhabitants. After the final speech of mayors the participants departed to their homes.