

Report from Begin project, 14 – 28 February 2016

Programme of Student and Teaching Staff Mobility to Prague Institute of Education and Communication (IVP), Czech University of Life Sciences (CZU), Prague

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Sunday 14 February

Arrival

We were met at the airport and brought to the Institute of Education and Communication (IVP) at Mala Chuchle, our place for accommodation in Prague.

Monday 15 February

Welcome to Institute, mobility goals and programme overview, Participants' short self presentation, personal expectations



We met the director of IVP, Prof. Milan Slavic, and he gave us a short presentation about CZU and IVP. In the same meeting we were introduced to many other of the members of the IVP staff, so we got a broad overview of the work at the institute. We gave a short introduction about our self and our backgrounds. After the formal welcome the Norwegian participants and the Czech coordinators, Jiri and Jitka, went through the

program and the plans for the next weeks.

The evening was spent together with Jana, a student at IVP. She helped us out with some practical issues regarding public transportation, and gave us a first overview of the main sights in Prague.



Prague sightseeing by student from CZU

Tuesday 16 February

Meeting at Faculty of Environmental Sciences, Department of Ecology

Presentation and discussion about nature resources management and nature protection in the Czech Republic

We had an interesting meeting where we learned more about the Faculty and their research. In the end we came into the topic of nature resource management and nature protection in the Czech Republic, and we agreed to meet again next week to discuss the topic more.

Prague Zoological garden, overview of pedagogical activities for schools and for the public

Here we met Petra Polakova who works as a guide in Prague Zoo. She gave us a deep insight



in how Prague Zoo works with bringing knowledge about their animals, their habits and needs to pupils and kids from kindergarten. They have many different educational programs, and have an impressive number of visitors from schools and kindergartens every year. About 12 000 kids are doing their programs every year, and as Petra said “when you are allowed to touch, you remember better”. So when they are not able to touch the animals directly they use other things as feathers, horns, fur etc.

We also got a brief tour of the Zoo after the presentation.

Wednesday 17 February

Visit to the course Counselling, second year Bc. Students (prof. Slavik)

In this lecture we were asked in advance to present the Norwegian educational system. We started with a short presentation of NMBU and our background before we did a “Think-pair-share” about Norway with the students. This to warm up, and to give a short presentation of one pedagogical tool we have learned through our studies. We got a lot of interesting feedback, and the Czech students were actively involved.

After we presented the Norwegian school system and it was compared with the Czech school system. We found a lot of similarities, even though there were some differences too. In the end, we saw a little part of how the course in counselling is run. There was a student giving a presentation (about a self chosen topic), she was filmed and after the presentation the teacher and the class gave her feedback. We only saw the first part, as we had to move on to the next meeting.

Meeting with the third year Bc. students (organized by Czech students)

Here the students had prepared both some nice Czech food and a couple of presentations about Czech food and culture. We learned a lot about dumplings, goulash, Easter, Jan Hus and religion to mention some of many topics. We learned a lot, and we also compared Czech and Norway quite a lot to see where we had similarities and differences.



Thursday 18 February

Secondary agricultural school in Chrudim

Our trip towards the Krkonoše started with a visit to the secondary agricultural school in Chrudim. We were taken on a great trip through the school, the labs, some classrooms and met a couple of classes, and we also went to the school farm. We learned a lot about how an agricultural school is run, and about Czech agriculture in general. The school had around 300 pupils, and 55 employees. This is an average school in the field of agriculture. They have three study

directions; agrobusiness, ecology and government and nature conservation.

Secondary veterinary school in Hradec Králové

The next visit for the day was at the veterinary school in Hradec Kralove. It was a school with 400 pupils and 30 teachers. They had very up to date labs and other learning facilities. They told that they have a good mixture of both quite newly educated teachers (almost directly from the university) and teachers with long experience in their fields (e.g. veterinarians), and they are very satisfied with the mixture of this in the collegium.



Friday 19 February

Secondary forestry school in Trutnov

During our visit to the Forestry School in Trutnov we learned a lot about the school itself, but also about forestry and ecology which were very interesting. The forestry school in Trutnov consists of three separate campuses, one more theoretical and the other more practically oriented. The one in Trutnov was in an old building, newly renovated with the help of a reputable architect. They had, as the two other schools we visited yesterday nice exhibitions of animals, insects and plants from the Czech nature. Jiri told us that the management had good connections to the Ministry of Forestry that were also visiting the school the present day. We got a strong impression that good connections and having someone that are clever when it comes to applying for funds, are incredibly important for the school economy.



We were showed around at all three campuses as well as some of their forest area. At the latter place we were told a bit about how they use the forest in their education and some facts about forestry, e.g. grow larch at the outermost part of the forest as they are more tolerant for wind (deep root system). The forest area was mainly planted with Norwegian Spruce. We were told that it takes about 120 years to get a fully grown forest. Thinning of the forest happened about 2-4 times before the threes were ready to be cut down. New Norwegian spruce were planted with little space between each new plant so that they would develop small and short branches.

We also visited some of the classes. In one of the them, a student told us that he lived closer to another forestry school, but he wanted to go in Trutnov, one of the reasons being the after-school activities they offered, such as volleyball and beekeeping. Many of the students in the forestry class and the technical class told us that they wanted to continue with the discipline forestry after finishing upper secondary school.

Saturday 20 February

Excursion to Krkonoše national park

We had a very nice day in the mountains. Lars Erik, Jiri, Jitka, Inga and Elin walked by foot to a mountain farm and Julie and Olav Einar went skiing in Pec pod Sněžkou. All of us had a very nice day with outdoor activities. Very good to use our bodies after a week packed with information and new experiences.



Sunday 21 February

We had a day off, and we did some sightseeing in Prague. An impressive city when it comes to how well the old buildings are taken care of!



Monday 22 February

Meeting at Faculty of Environmental Sciences, Department of Ecology. Information about Czech nature resource management and history by Mr. Pospíšil



After our last meeting, we still had a lot of questions regarding nature resource management in the Czech Republic, and were very lucky to be invited again to hear more about this topic. Our teacher for the day was Mr. Pospíšil who held a very interesting lecture firstly about nature resource management, including how the management is build up, what kind of challenges they are facing and how they work to change these conditions. It was especially impressing how they have managed to get the freshwater conditions in Czech Republic so much better in just a few decades!

It also turned out that Mr. Pospíšil also knew a much about history and social science, so we were lucky to learn a about these topics too. After the lecture/conversation, we got a tour around in some of the new labs at the faculty and then we got to see the large complex of greenhouses located on the campus.

Sightseeing in Prague

After the visit to the Faculty of Environmental Sciences, Jana, Martina and Tereza guided us around in the city, and we got a closer look at some of the main sights such as the observation Tower on Petřín and the National Theatre before having a great meal together.



Tuesday 23 February

Visit to the Centre of environmental education in Světice

The Centre of environmental education in Světice was an impressive place with its location in the middle of a forest. The centre had an incredible atmosphere and scientific approach created by truly competent teachers. In the education centre, students could learn about wild animals, insects, plants and sustainable or traditional use of the nature. The education centre used a very practical approach in their education in comparison to many other schools. If you can make the students feel they are parts of the nature, they will start caring about it. We think the Centre of environmental education in Světice gave us such an experience with its close bond to nature.



Visit to local museum in Říčany, its activities in education Evening

Our visit to the local museum in Říčany was a great experience that gave us a lot of inspiration. The magnificent geological park at the museum was made in very a pedagogical way giving the students opportunities to excavate fossils, observe miniature meandering rivers and study other well created geological models. A study park of such scale is rarely seen and surely contributes to better knowledge and motivation of learning geology for most visitors. We think that this practical and visual way of presenting geology might be a good way of teaching a hard topic for younger students. We were truly inspired by the geopark and have got a lot of new ideas we will bring back to Norway.



Wednesday 24 February

Participation in course – the first year students



This day we took part in a course with the first year students. We spend much of the time presenting the educational system in Norway, and had a nice dialog with the students comparing the educational system in both countries. The students were also eager to know more about Norway and we told them a lot of interesting fact about Norway. We arranged the discussion in a pedagogical way using a pedagogical sun and the “think-pair-share-method”. Norway was the key-word and the Czech students shared their thought about Norway filling the sun with interesting information. The Czech students has also prepared a

quiz about the Czech Republic. I think we scored quite well.

Visit to a dairy farm - Farma Krupička

Later the same day we went to a local dairy farm with Lenka. The farm was from the 1600-century, and it was amazing to see how they milked, worked and lived in the old buildings! Here we were showed around in the different buildings including the kitchen. We learned a lot about how they run the farm which is quite complicated as the buildings and farmyard is protected by law, which makes it challenging to change or increase the production. We saw the milking procedure and got to taste the finished milk products, which tasted delicious!



It was fascinating to see the old buildings, and very interesting to hear about the history of the farm, that was turned into a collective farm during the Soviet time and delivered back to the family after the Velvet revolution. The father of the farmer of today told us that he and his wife decided to return as farmers, even though they had taken a different education (both were teachers). After the tour we were invited into the farmer's home where we met their three children and got to taste more of their new cheeses, drink tea and talk. We were taken aback with their hospitality and how tasteful the cheese was that they had just started making.

Thursday 25 February

Supervision of teacher trainee at secondary vocational school in Roudnice



On Thursday we went with Jiri to a vocational school in Roudnice to see the process of supervision of a teacher trainee student. First the student held a lesson while Jiri, her supervisor at the vocational school, and the rest of us observed. The lesson was held in Czech, but for us it was more interesting to observe the teaching methods and body language, voice and so on. Therefore it was not that important for us to understand the oral language (maybe it even was a bonus not to understand!). After the lesson, there was a meeting with the teacher trainee and her two supervisors including Jiri. The meeting included both

thoughts and feelings about the lesson from the trainee students, and feedback from the supervisors on what worked well, what could be done differently and examples of how. During the meeting we were also encouraged to be a part by giving feedback on what we had observed, which was very interesting. The teacher trainee did a great job and we were impressed that she kept so calm and relaxed when so many were observing her! And we really appreciated that she was so kind to us by letting us observe the lesson and including us in the meeting afterwards.

Observation of a biology lesson



After the meeting, an experienced biology teacher at the same school was kind to let us observe her biology lesson. Even though we don't understand the language, we could definitely see that she really knew her subject and it looked like she was good at involving the pupils. It was interesting to see both similarities and still some differences in the way of teaching from what we are used to from Norway. One method we are not used to, was the evaluation of students in front of the rest of the class. At first we

thought that this could be quite scary for the pupil, but the pupils looked quite calm about it and continued to be active by raising the hand and answering questions during the rest of the lesson.

Dinner at Institute, homemade Czech dishes by Jiri, Jitka and Jana

To celebrate that the project was coming to an end, Jiri, Jitka and Jana had prepared dinner for us at the institute. The food was typical Czech, and together with Czech wine, it tasted really delicious. We had a nice celebration and finished the project in the best way.



Friday 26 February

Meeting with teacher trainees at Institute

The meeting with teacher trainees at the institute was nice and we exchanged ideas about teaching and our own wishes for the future. It was nice to meet other students that were in the same situation as us. We found out that being a teacher trainee in Czech Republic and Norway is very much the same.

Saturday 27 February

Free time

During this day we had the opportunity to go shopping and visit more attractions in the beautiful city of Prague. This was also the day for saying goodbye to your new friends and we had a nice evening with Jana at her home.

Sunday 28 February

Departure

We left Mala Chuchle in the morning and went to the airport by using public transport. We were happy to be followed by Jitka the whole way to the airport. Elin, Inga and Olav Einar had a lot of luggage and was transported by car to the airport.

Professional and personal output

Julie

The stay in Czech Republic have given me a lot of inspiration, knowledge and connections that are of both professional and personal value for me.

During the stay I have learned a lot about nature resource management, forestry and agriculture in Czech Republic, as well as history and educational system. I have also got to know knowledgeable people within this fields. I am sure that both the knowledge and connections will be an enrichment for me in a future profession as teacher or nature resource manager. The visits to different schools, Prague Zoo and the museum in Říčany have given me many good ideas I will use in future teaching. I was especially inspired by the practical way of presenting topics and activating the pupils in the pedagogical programs in Prague Zoo, at the museum in Říčany and the Centre of Environmental Education in Světlice. Together with being educative it was also a lot of fun being in Czech Republic, experiencing the culture and seeing so many beautiful places!

Last but not least, I meet a lot of nice and interesting people and made new friends I definitely will met up with again!

Lars Erik

My trip to the Czech Republic gave me a new network of good people. I have made a lot of good friends during this trip and feel that I got a lot of valuable knowledge. My new contacts might be an important resource for me later in life when working with education. I was really inspired by the geological park in Říčany, and I think the Norwegian educational system can be improved by using more practical approaches when teaching young students. I was also impressed to see how well equipped many of the schools were. The collection of stuffed animals at the secondary forestry school in Trutnov was really impressing and exceeds the quality of the collection in the Norwegian University of Life Sciences. I think this trip gave much inspiration and I will start my career as a teacher with more good ideas.

Elin

What I will take with me the most from this trips is first of all my new network in the Czech republic. We met so many interesting and knowledgeable people during our stay, and I will for sure use them if needed later in my life working with nature, agriculture and schools.

I was also very inspired by the visit to the museum in Říčany, and I will bring with me ideas about how to present topics in other ways than I am used to (and I think the visit gave me ideas for my field also, not just geology and nature).

To present, discuss and compare your own school system has also given me some eyeopeners, it is always good to try to see your own system from the outside!