

THE PROJECT 'LIBRARY AS A MEETING PLACE FOR MANY CULTURES' HAS BEEN STARTED

Multicultural and creative, in the atmosphere of dialogue and self-reflection, and what's more, in eight languages: Norwegian, Romany, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Russian, English, Kashubian and Polish. Such were the two events which launched the project 'Library as a Meeting Place for Many Cultures' that took place between 24th and 28th June this year: a study visit of a group of Norwegian librarians to Poland, and a Polish-Norwegian multicultural workshop.

Seven librarians from Oslo, Hordaland, Oppland, Buskerud and Bergen participated in the study visit to Polish public libraries which operate in the district of Pomerania: in Gdańsk, Kartuzy and Chmielno. During the first day, Norwegian librarians visited the Regional and Municipal Public Library in Gdańsk. They got to know the organisation of Polish book collection about ethnical minorities. Thanks to Kashubian collection gathered in the Regional and Municipal Public Library in Gdańsk they learned how a good compilation of a book collection can help to popularise the knowledge about minorities and to promote the culture of the whole region.

During a meeting with representatives of the Immigrant Support Centre, which was organised in the Manhattan Library, Norwegian guests familiarized themselves with another aspect of the multiculturalism in Poland. The Immigrant Support Centre deals with needs of immigrants who live in Tri-City in Poland (an urban area consisting of three major Polish cities in the Pomerania Voivodeship: Gdańsk, Gdynia and Sopot), ensures them support of experts who give free advice (such as about law and health protection) as well as conduct Polish classes. The Manhattan Library, which is a modern multimedia library frequently visited by foreigners, plans to start cooperation with the Centre in autumn.

The Norwegians spent their second day of the visit in the Kashubian Switzerland. They visited the Municipal and County Public Library in Kartuzy and the Communal Public Library in Chmielno – two libraries which actively cooperate with representatives of the Kashubian minority. The guests also enjoyed this day because of a musical and culinary surprise prepared by librarians from Kartuzy and a folk group cooperating with the library. There was another surprise waiting for them: a village-mayor, a native Kashub, together with the library's director, presented the Kashubian history and tradition of taking snuff.

A workshop about a model of a public library which operates for a multicultural community was conducted between 26th and 28th June in Gdańsk. Participants of the workshop were analysing and consulting the proposal of such a model prepared by Maja Branka and Dominika Cieślukowska who conducted the workshop. The workshop was multicultural not only because of its subject but also because of the group participating in the workshop. Apart from the librarians from Norway, representatives of non-governmental organisations, cultural minorities and libraries from different regions in Poland including: the Regional and Municipal Public Library in Gdańsk, the Regional Public Library in Olsztyn, the Regional Public Library in Cracow, the Municipal Public Library in Gorlice, the Cultural Centre and Library in Brusy, the Anti-discrimination Education Association, the Intercultural Education Foundation, the Association of the Practitioners of Culture, the Association for Legal Intervention, the Consultancy and Information Centre for Romany People in Poland, the Theatre of Folk Ceremonies 'Zaboracy', Polish Radio Olsztyn and the Information Society Development Foundation took part in the workshop. During classes the participants were discussing the values and mission which a multicultural library should implement. They shared their experience and acquainted themselves with various aspects of multiculturalism dependent on people's place of origin as well as prior life or work experience.



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