

Annual Report 2020



Společnost Rožmberk o.p.s.



(Rozmberk Society p.b.c.)

Summary¹

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic, all plans and expectations for the year 2020 were cancelled or put on hold.

We were lucky that thanks to a quick lock-down, our region in South Bohemia had relative low numbers of sick and deceased for most of the year.

However, both by following the law and out of precaution, we had to cancel all our traditional annual events. In addition, all pre-arranged or ad-hoc school excursions and visits from private groups to our visitor centres were stopped.

In the end, our visitor centres were open only from mid-June to end of August. This helped us to some extent limit the financial losses due to the pandemic.

I. Introduction

The Rozmberk Society (hereafter the Society) was established in 1998 as a public benefit corporation. Its mission is natural and cultural heritage preservation combined with regional development. Our main operating area covers most of the Trebon Basin and Novohradská foothills in the eastern part of South Bohemia, Czech Republic.

The Society runs projects and operates two visitor centres for heritage preservation and cultural activities. Since 2001, the Society operates the [Peasant and Emigration Museum](#) in the former school in the village of Kojakovice. The museum focuses on village life and emigration to America in the period 1850 – 1918 and on WWI. Since 2004, we also run the [historic blacksmith workshop \(the Smithy\)](#) in Nove Hradý.

The Rozmberk Society has no permanent employees. The Director is by law also the Legal Representative of the Society and this is a long-term unpaid appointment. Employees (mostly 4 – 7 persons per year) are hired within the framework of grants and projects or with support of the regional Labour Office. When possible, the Society hires temporary employees from socially disadvantaged groups to help cover the main visitor period of the year. Volunteers work on the basis of needs and availability.

II. Events and ongoing activities

Kojakovice Peasant and Emigration Museum

The Museum was open only in July and August, and during that period also not permanently due to staff shortage as result of the pandemic. No foreigners visited the museum this year, and the regular visits through the [Greenways Travel Club](#) and other foreign partners were cancelled. The museum used to be open upon request outside normal opening dates (especially for school visits or foreign groups), but that was cancelled as well. As expected, with only around regular 550 visitors (adults and children) and no groups, total visitor numbers were far below normal.

Nove Hradý Historic Blacksmith Workshop

This year, the Smithy was open for visitors only from mid-June to the end of September. About 2 600 visitors (adults, seniors, and children) passed through this limited season, 300 more than last year. This increase is almost certainly due to lifting of the COVID restrictions nationally but still existing or expected restrictions on travel abroad. In this respect, we actually expected-hoped for a more significant increase in visitors.

¹ Since most of the readers of the report are foreign, especially the funding organizations, the Annual Report is written only in English, as is allowed.

Apprentice blacksmiths demonstrated occasionally during the summer season. The apprentices also used the Smithy outside the season for accommodation and training while continuing their blacksmith education with master blacksmith [Daniel Cerny](#).

Special demonstrations events for schools, groups, and disabled people were halted due to the pandemic.

Traditional annual events

The Smithy traditionally hosts three one-day cultural events: Easter, Potato-day, and Devil's Forging. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these actions were cancelled.

Since 2001, the Society helps with the logistics and finances of the week-long summer camp at the Nakolice fish pond for children of the Jílovice primary school and other children from the region. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the summer camp was cancelled as well.

III. Projects

Danube Transnational Programme project *NETWORLD*

The NETWORLD project was completed in 2019. However, we continued our research in the fate of soldiers from Kojakovice fallen abroad.

Visegrad project *"Let's mix the Quartet of Built and Cultural Heritage, Gastronomy and Handicraft"*

Since 2019, the Society is participating in the VISEGRAD project on combining local assets to develop nice cultural tourism. Four partners from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland participated in this project, under leadership of the Town of Szarvas, Hungary.

The final meeting took place in June 2020 in Szarvas, Hungary, after restrictions for travel were lifted.

ABANA Conference 2020

Every two years, the Artisan Blacksmith Association of North America ([ABANA](#)) organizes a multi-day international blacksmith meeting. The Society has sent blacksmiths under leadership of blacksmith Daniel Cerny to demonstrate at ABANA Conferences already three times. We were invited to attend the Conference again in 2020 and demonstrate there for several days. Participation and accommodation would have been covered by ABANA, and sponsors for the travel were being secured also. Unfortunately, the event was cancelled due to the pandemic.

Online Cancer Support Platform

Experiences with cancer patients in our direct surroundings show that patient information, doctor-patient relations, and support organizations (including online platforms) are subpar here compared with, for example, the Netherlands and the USA. We are investigating the need for and feasibility of establishing an online information platform and discussion forum for cancer patients based upon the Dutch, UK, and US experience. Society Director Robert Dulfer has received a grant to attend the [FORCE Hereditary Breast Cancer Conference](#) in Pennsylvania in June 2020 and start discussions on cooperation and support. However, this event has been cancelled as well.

Ecomuseum project ECHOES

The Society hosted a kick-off partner meeting for the ECHOES partners in Prague in 2019. The outline for a contract of cooperation was agreed upon, waiting final approval by the legal representatives and boards of the partners. Early 2020, it was decided by the main

leading partners that project partners could only be LAGs. We tried to transfer our commitment to the regional LAG Ruze, but they were weary of foreign project and as such did not want to commit to this project. The Society will stay in contact as an associate partner but without strong financial support will not be able to develop activities at this moment.

Project applications

Unfortunately, we did not have successful applications on an international level this year. This is mainly due to the ending of the EU funding rounds for the period 2014-2020. At the end of these programs, funds are running low and the number of applications is high, reducing the chances of projects being approved.

IV. Other activities – Memberships

LAG Ruze

Since the LAG was established, the Society has been a member of the Local Action Group [MAS Sdružení Růže](#). Society co-director Olga Cerna is active in the working group for social activities and is a member of the Commission selecting projects for funding.

Newcastles of the World

The town of Nove Hradky (South Bohemia) is a member of the governing board of the Newcastles of the World Alliance. Society Director Robert Dulfer together with the mayor Vladimir Hokr are the representatives for Nove Hradky on the Board.

The 2020 Newcastles of the World Conference in Switzerland had to be cancelled due to the pandemic.

V Human Resources

In 2020, the Society employed only three people on short-term contracts. The Society received funding from the regional Labour Office covering 75% of wage costs.

VI Future plans

At the time of writing this Annual Report, the Covid-19 pandemic and accompanying restrictions still have a large impact on normal life. Even with vaccination efforts now in full swing, it is not clear how the pandemic will develop further. In addition, the new EU funding period 2021-2027 is still being developed. The earliest calls for proposals are expected at the end of 2021.

As such, our plans for 2021 and further are unclear until the full impact over time of the pandemic is known better and the new rounds of funding become available.

We do plan to apply for an ERASMUS+ project connecting students and experts from different Ecomuseums specialized in crafts. The cooperation with the Heritage Craft Center in Italy has been put on hold as well, awaiting better times.

Most important, in 2021 our Czech Emigration Museum will celebrate its 20th year of existence. In addition, during her research on the village history, Society Founder and Vice-Director Olga Cerna found a remark referring to the village of Kojakovice dated 1371. To date, this is the oldest known reference, and as such Kojakovice will celebrate its 650th birthday in 2021 as well. We already are in discussion with the Jilovice Municipality when and how to celebrate this.

VII. Summary Financial Year 2020

The financial year 2020 ended with a positive result for income and expenditure. This is largely due to the fact that the final instalment for the NETWORLD project was received this year.

The balance sheet and more detailed financial information over the year 2020 are available on our website and upon request.

NETWORLD project funding

The NETWORLD project ended in 2019, and the final instalment arrived in 2020. However, this covers only 85% of all expenditure. The Society has had to arrange 15% co-funding. In addition, the project had to be fully prefinanced by the Society. For this, a bank loan has been obtained through our bank WSPK. In 2020, most of the 15% co-funding was still outstanding. In addition, our bank WSPK was taken over by Ceska Sporitelna bank. Nevertheless, with some delay, we were able to secure an extension of the loan until the end of 2022 needed to compensate for the lower income in 2020 due to the pandemic.

Other income

Support from the Labour Office this year amounted to approximately 1 900 €. Additional funding was received from the Town of Nove Hradky (cca 3 000 €) and other local or regional sources.

The Visegrad project was paid through a final invoice to the Hungarian project leader. Additional income was also obtained through our two visitors' centres and through other services provided.

VIII. Last but not least

The year 2020 was difficult, but when and where this legally was allowed we tried to open our visitor centres and ran activities and events when and where this was prudent. We got very positive feedback from visitors to this.

We would like to thank to all who provided us with enormous moral and other support during the ongoing pandemic. We are looking forward continuing our work and good relations in 2020.

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