

## DIVERSITY IN LIBRARIES

### Organisations Involved & Contact Details

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### Aims & Target Group

Libraries as Gateways to the Integration of Immigrants in the EU (European Union) aims at best possible integration of immigrants on the local level in various EU countries through education and information provided in public libraries.

**Aims:** Diversity in Libraries is a project aimed at helping libraries build multicultural collections and enhance their role in regards to the acceptance of minorities through intercultural education of librarians

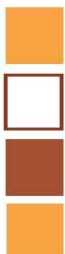
Since 2002, we have been implementing *Diversity in Libraries*, a project designed for Czech public libraries and aimed at turning them into a unique space where diverse cultures can meet. We believe that libraries play a major role in developing and culturing civil society at the local level and that it is therefore important to strengthen their role as information, educational and cultural centers accessible to all.

### Target Groups:

- Third country immigrants living in selected EU countries,
- Librarians and information specialists, as well as their professional associations in respective countries,
- Local communities (local organizations representing immigrants as well as non-organized immigrants, local authorities, school officials, volunteers) involved in the pilot local implementations
- Regional and national authorities through a direct presentations of the outcomes of the project, as well as potential policy recommendations.


### Project Description & Components

There is no doubt that public libraries play an important role in disseminating information about multicultural issues and minorities and also in providing an opportunity to enter into intercultural dialogue. In order to fulfill this role, there is a strong need for a culturally aware, committed and open-minded librarian capable of dealing with library users from different ethnic backgrounds and understanding the new function of a public library in today's multicultural society.





It was *Diversity in Libraries*, an ongoing project launched by the Multicultural Center Prague in 2002, which for the first time (within the Czech Republic) pointed out the importance of public libraries in today's multicultural society.

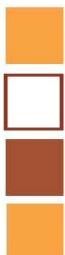
- *Diversity in Libraries* is aimed at making available to users of Czech public libraries books that provide information about the past and present as well as the customs and traditions of different cultures, ethnic and national minorities or books that deal with the hot issue of multiculturalism.
- In 2002-2004, we distributed, free of charge, a number of books for children, students, experts as well as the general reading public to 500 libraries all over the Czech Republic.
- In cooperation with the libraries, MKC Prague organizes complementary cultural events about minorities living in the Czech Republic in order to promote the distributed books and above all to make both children and adults to actively look for more information, for example by turning to relevant literature.
- The project also includes an artistic and literary competition for children designed to make them ponder what is there in their and other cultures to appreciate, what is interesting and also inspiring and therefore enriching.
- Another objective of the project is to educate librarians and information officers working in libraries through regional training sessions and international conferences.
- Apart from workshops and conferences, the Multicultural Centre Prague provides other important information and support to libraries such as a mailing list (Multicultural Books Acquisition Service) and a website about multicultural librarianship [www.rozmanitost.cz](http://www.rozmanitost.cz)  ("rozmanitost" means diversity in Czech).

## Process

Throughout this project, libraries on local, regional and Europe-wide level will gain awareness and potential to become vital points for integration of immigrants, as well as a place of mutual and continuous contact between immigrant and local communities which will remain in place beyond the scope of this project.

Specifically, the transnational experience and good practice concerning the role of the libraries as efficient models for integration will be:

- a) identified on a European level
- b) shared among all partners in the project
- c) used to formulate strategic guidelines for those EU countries with less experience in the field,
- d) presented to local stakeholders in less experienced EU countries, such as local organizations representing immigrants, local authorities, schools and public libraries,
- e) implemented on local level through a pilot network of libraries with a specific goal of better local integration,
- f) presented on local, regional and wider-European level,
- g) policy recommendations will be formulated on both local and regional levels.





## Outcomes

In fall 2004, we carried out a survey among 500 libraries in order to find out how Czech libraries work with minorities and foreigners and what services are available to these new users. We conducted a survey among members of minorities. Recently, MKC Prague released a new book entitled [Libraries for All](#). It summarizes more than three years of experience on the part of the Multicultural Center Prague with the project. An English version of the book is available at [here](#) since September 2005. The overall objective of all project activities is to create in public libraries a unique space for meeting of diverse cultures.

Thanks to the experience from Diversity in Libraries, a new project entitled Libraries as Gateways to the Integration of Immigrants in the EU has begun in 2005. Diversity to Libraries was part of the Campaign against Racism financed by the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic (2002-2004). It has been supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Prague, the Czech-German Fund for the Future as well as the European Union (Directorate-General for Education and Culture).

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## Challenges & Obstacles

To secure the financial support from various sources and maintain the interest and participation of immigrants on the local level in various EU countries.

## Funding

The project is supported by the European Union's program "INTI - Pilot Projects on Integration of Third Country Nationals" and is undertaken with the assistance of the Government of Canada.

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