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# Like the Tower of Babel – students from 35 countries take part in Summer School

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Charles University recently hosted its annual summer school, where, over the course of four weeks, students interested in Czech studies gathered in the lecture rooms of the CU Faculty of Arts, went on excursions, trips, and took part in discussions in order to learn more about the basics, or to refine their already advanced knowledge, of Czech language and culture.

Students' efforts culminated on Thursday 22 August, when they received certificates for successful completion of the Summer School of Slavonic Studies from their teachers.

The closing ceremony of the 57<sup>th</sup> edition of the Summer School of Slavonic Studies, organised by the Institute of Czech Studies of the Faculty of Arts, was attended by the Prorector of Charles University, Professor PhDr. Ivan Jakubec, CSc., and the Dean of the CU Faculty of Arts, docent PhDr. Michal Stehlík, PhD. The summer school took place under the auspices of the Rector of Charles University, Professor Václav Hampl.

As in previous years, participants in the summer school came from a very diverse range of countries. The greatest number of students came from Germany (27), Russia (11) and Japan (10), with students also finding their way to Prague from Australia, China, Colombia, Mexico and Taiwan; there were even three students from North Korea. A total of 35 countries were represented at this year's summer school.

"The management of the Faculty of Arts considers it an honour to welcome representatives of Slavic and Czech studies to its grounds every year. I would like to express my sincere wish and hope that we will meet many of today's audience again in years to come. Charles University and its Faculty of Arts, true to its best traditions, wishes, in this way, to continue contributing to the development of international scientific cooperation, thus helping to spread interest in the Czech language and Czech literature, culture and history," said Michal Stehlík, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, in his speech during the ceremony.

The Summer School of Slavonic Studies has traditionally been oriented primarily towards the Czech and Slavonic academic community outside the Czech Republic; the organisers do not, however, wish to exclude those from other fields who are also interested in studying Czech language and culture. As the director of the summer school, PhDr. Jiří Hasil, Ph.D., mentioned in his speech, the Institute of Czech Studies bases its programme on a broad range of lectures and complex activities for an integrated teaching and social-cultural programme, accessible to all participants, as well as the quality of teaching by its lecturers and perfect running of the Summer School.

"It is only in this way that we can guarantee the high quality of the Prague Summer School, and only in this way that we can award participants with the appropriate number of European credits, guaranteeing that the month that they spend at the Summer School will be equivalent to a semester's worth of study of the Czech language at a university abroad. We neither want to, nor shall we, deviate from this route, even under the pressures of economics," declared Dr. Hasil.

The final word following the presentation of certificates for successful completion of the summer school usually belongs to the students themselves. This year, two regular attendees took their place on the podium. The first speaker was Adrien Stozicky from France, whose ancestors lived in Bohemia in the times of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. "I, however, even after many years of studying Czech, still cannot pronounce the letter 'ř' properly. And whenever I try to pronounce it, I often wonder why my ancestor couldn't have come from, say, Italy or Spain, like most of the immigrants to France. For French people, it's easy to learn Spanish or Italian, while Czech is a bit of a challenge. And that's why I like it," said Adrien, who became interested in the Czech Republic because of his surname, an uncommon one in France.

The very end of the ceremony belonged to the Russian student, Maria Smetanina, who expressed her sadness that she wasn't able to take part in a real graduation and pledge loyalty to Charles University. "I hope that each one of us will, in their heart, stay loyal to the Czech language, Czech culture and the friendships that were created at the summer school."