
International Staff Training Week

Charles University holds its first International Staff Training Week

In the week from 7th March until 11th March 2016, Charles University hosted its first International Staff Training Week. The Staff Training Week was an event for representatives of CU partner universities from around Europe, mainly connected to the Erasmus+ programme. The week was action packed with Faculty tours and events showing what CU offers for both international as well as local staff and students. Twenty three representatives from seventeen partner universities took part. Belgium (University of Antwerp), Germany (Humboldt University of Berlin, LMU Munich, Regensburg, Konstanz, Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nuremberg, Hamburg), Poland (Warsaw, Wroclaw, Lublin, Lodz, Kielce and The Pontifical University of John Paul II. in Krakow) and the United Kingdom (University of Sussex, University of Warwick and Leeds Beckett University) were all represented.

During their stay the participants were given an in depth tour of five faculties of Charles University: the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, Faculty of Science and First Faculty of Medicine as well as the Faculty of Law and Faculty of Arts. Although these faculties are only a small representation of what Charles University has to offer they showcase the wide range of subjects and courses available. The participants were even able to see teaching up close in the First Faculty of Medicine. Other faculties offered presentations or guided tours through their buildings, including a training court room in the Faculty of Law, the new central library of the Faculty of Arts (Jan Palach Library) and excavations of the medieval church of St. Wenceslas in the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics.

Charles University has more to offer than just excellence in academic teaching. Participants were shown the many different Charles University exhibitions, museums and historically important buildings – for example the Faculty of Science's extensive historical map collection, Hrdlička Museum of Mankind and the Botanical Garden of Charles University. During the week, participants were shown the diversity of Charles University research through various presentations – for example "Czechoslovakia 1938-1989", a collaborative and award winning computer game created by the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics and Faculty of Arts, the Malach audiovisual archive of survivor recollections of the Holocaust and on-going excavations of the world-famous Czech Institute of Egyptology in Egypt and Sudan.

Yet, the week was more than a showcase of what Charles University can offer. It was a key event in maintaining important partnerships with different European Universities. After all the aim of the Erasmus program is to promote student and staff exchange, in order to help broaden perspectives by creating dialogue. Bringing together representatives from almost 20 universities allowed for the exchange of practices and ideas through formal events as well as informal settings.

Participants were able to share short presentations on good practice with other members. Sharing ideas and strategies in this way strengthens exchange programs as each university can be inspired by others.

Ester Aventin from the University of Sussex spoke about recruiting students for Erasmus mobility programmes, Rachel Cuddihy from the University of Warwick as well as Terry Amssons from the University of Antwerp addressed services for the incoming students and Nadine Stäcker from the University of Hamburg spoke about the reintegration of the returning domestic students after the end of their study stay abroad.

Agnieszka Vojta, from the University of Konstanz, gave a very interesting talk about a system to link international students with migrant families to help assist them with enrolling their children into school. Language exchange is one of the many ways to improve relations between countries and is one of the highlights of Erasmus. The event was rounded off with presentations of projects ran by Charles University to help integrate international students into University life. The most important of these being the Charles University choir and orchestra, the Europe Meets School voluntary educational program and last but not least the International iForum project which brings you this article.

The cultural highlights of the International Staff Training Week included an opera performance at the National Theatre of Antonín Dvořák's *Jakobín* as well as visit of the exhibition "Without Borders: Art in the Ore Mountains" which was prepared in cooperation with the Faculty of Arts. Especially the opera performance was a great opportunity how to bring together employees from Erasmus and International Offices of Charles University, the representatives of the partner universities from abroad as well as their students, currently being hosted by Charles University.

All in all, we believe the first International Staff Training Week of Charles University in Prague was a great success. Charles University plans to offer similar events each 1-2 years from now on.

Margot Abbott studies Anthropology at Durham University and here at the Faculty of Education. Margot's interests are in the arts, entrepreneurship and exploring. Whilst in Prague she hopes to learn the language, make the most of her

travel pass and meet new people from all over Europe and the world. She looks forward to sharing her experiences, via the iForum, with you.

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