

Alena Krejčí: Diversity Creates New Opportunities



Photo: Jan Suchánek / Centrum pro cizince JMK

We talked with Alena Krejčí, the director of the South Moravian Centre for Foreigners, about the changes, dreams, and about how the Czechs' attitude towards foreigners is changing.

What has the New Year brought the Centre of Foreigners? What has changed?

From the point of view of the foreigner, nothing things, but something is different. Before we were part of the regional office, now we are an independent organization that is more confident, more dynamic, and more flexible. We can take more risks and accept new challenges. We want to try out new partnerships and international projects. We also have a great team, and the quality of our services is very high.

You have lately moved to a new address. How do you like it there?

We're closer to the client at the

new address [Kounicova 13]; you can literally visit us from the street. We now have more modern, more pleasant, and better designed spaces.

Who does the Centre help?

We not only help foreigners but also all those who are around foreigners; employers, municipalities, or organizations. We also focus on the public. We communicate why foreigners come here and the benefits of a diverse society made from people of various origins, with diverse experiences, knowledge, stories... Diversity creates new opportunities and moves the society forward as a whole. If we were all the same, then the development would not be quick nor interesting.

How exactly do you transmit this message to the public?

In our new campaign "Our Compatriots" we want to show that we think of the foreigners who settled down here as part

of our society – our countrymen and countrywomen. I would also like to continue with this campaign by adding stories of Czechs who live, work, or are friends with foreigners. We are interested how they came to know each other; maybe they share traditions, recipes or teach English to children. If you would be interested, please visit krajane.cizincijmk.cz.

How did you personally come to the topic of integration?

It influenced me when I myself became a foreigner when I went to Canada for two years. There I saw how people can live together despite their different skin color or religion.

Do you think that the Czech's opinion of foreigners is changing?

Definitely, the situation in Ukraine helped a lot. Ukrainians are foreigners who we like and tolerate. It is a great leap forward.

How do you envision the Centre in the future?

I like the model that I saw in Portugal; an international house offering not only complex services for foreigners, but also available for non-profit organizations and community activities. There is also an opportunity to try out international cuisine or to look at an exhibition. That is my dream.

What do you do in your free time?

I like to play sports with my children and I am also an avid reader. Right now, I am reading the biography of Tomáš Baťa. I think we are alike in enthusiasm and in our vision. "A well-rested and content employee is a creative employee," he says, and I agree with him.

Centre for Foreigners
www.cizincijmk.cz

