

Report on Summer Workshop Camp by ETP Slovakia

Dávid Korčkovský

ETP Slovakia was part of the Summer Workshop Camp, which took place from July 29 to August 4 at the International Youth Center in Auschwitz. The Summer Workshop Camp was organized by Fundacja Dom Kultury in cooperation with the following organizations: Vzájemné soužití ops from the Czech Republic, we also collaborated with the Rso Harangos Cultural and Educational Association from Krakow. The basic idea of the project was for the countries belonging to the Vysegrad Countries to meet and get to know each other, together we remembered the Roma Holocaust and the life of Roma in each of the participating countries.

The first days were designed in the spirit of getting to know each other and the individual organizations from the countries belonging to the Visegrad Countries. Each organization led a part of the program and presented what it did in the given region, what activities it organised for children and youth, and how it worked with the Roma community. Then each country ran a social skills workshop for young people.

As part of the program, we also planned a visit to the Holocaust Museum Auschwitz - Birkenau and participated in the event commemorating the 79th anniversary of the extermination of the Roma and Sinti on August 2. Before visiting the museum, we had a workshop that prepared us for the visit. We went through the historical events that happened, how people ended up in the concentration camp, especially we focused on the historical events related to the Roma population who got into the concentration camps. We had to properly convey to young people the knowledge of the past that affected previous generations of Roma. Participating in the 79th anniversary of the extermination of Roma and Sinti was the first time in their lives they experienced such a memorial occasion, they carried it very emotionally. Young people from Slovakia were part of such an international summer camp for the first time as well. As they themselves admitted, they had no idea that the Roma were also murdered. It was very interesting to participate in a discussion with a survivor of the Holocaust, the young people perceived it very emotionally.

The Summer Workshop Camp program was prepared for learning about historical events that took place in the Roma nation, but at the same time, it was set up to learn about the current history and life of Roma in individual countries. Of course, there were activities aimed at creating new friendships among the participants of the Summer Workshop Camp. The Slovak delegation was interested very in the lecture by Agnieszka Caban, who presented the historical and current situation of the Roma in Poland. Young people from Slovakia were surprised at how many Roma live in Poland. They learned that it is a comparatively lower number than our country, only around 40 000, whereas in Slovakia it is around 450 000. It was also very interesting that the Roma in Poland do

not live in settlements and do not suffer from such social exclusion as the Roma in Slovakia. Because there are locations in Slovakia where Roma do not even have access to drinking water.

We spent one day of the workshop in Krakow, where we had a planned city tour led by native language guides. We also participated in a painting workshop led by Mr Janusz, which took place at the International Empathy Center. Each participant had one piece to paint at the workshop according to the instructions. No one knew what image was going to be created, which was interesting. At the end of the workshop, when everyone had finished their part, according to the instructions of the workshop leader, the youth arranged their piece of the puzzle, the resulting image was a dragon. Young people from Slovakia were attentive during the tour of the city of Krakow, where the guide told us the legend of the dragon, they asked me if we had painted that dragon.

Nice friendships were formed between the young participants from the member countries of the Visegrad Countries. After returning home, we see that young people from Poland and Slovakia are still in contact. A bond was formed between them that we hope would last a long time. They are looking forward to other joint projects and events that we will organize in the future.

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