

## **Feedback STEP – Summer School in Jihlava**

**By Lukas Gauster; Vienna, 06.09.2011**

At first I wasn't sure whether I should participate in the STEP – program or not. The Czech Republic does not have the best reputation in Austria. High criminality, no significant touristic spots (except for Prague, which is considered among most Austrians as one of the most beautiful cities in Europe), a country only good for cheap labour forces – that's how most of my friends and family members see the Czech Republic, although they have never been there. Then I looked through the schedule for the two weeks and it sounded quite interesting. Sight-seeing of several interesting spots, an intensive language course and a wide range of different lectures. So I decided to give it a try, also because I couldn't imagine visiting the Czech Republic by other means in the future. It was also free of cost, a fact that mustn't be underestimated. So I packed my suitcase and travelled to Jihlava, expecting nothing more than getting a little bit in touch with the local people and to get to know their culture.

After my two-weeks-stay in Jihlava I must say: It was one of the best times I've had the past few years!

Of course there were also some aspects that annoyed me. For example the fact, that most of the lectures, except of two, were not held. One of the reasons why I participated in the program was that I wanted to get in touch with subjects different from those of my study, e.g. marketing and management. I don't know why these lectures were dropped, because we had enough time for them – on some days we even had free time in the morning or in the afternoon. It was nice, because therefore we had the possibility to explore Jihlava on our own, but most of us were very interested in these lectures and I think it wasn't necessary to drop them due to time management problems.

Also the intensive language course was not that intensive as I expected, but it was o.k. We all learned something and our teachers were very friendly.

But the thing that annoyed me the most was that some of us (including me and my roommates) had to move to another room only one day before our departure, because our room was already rented to somebody else. We immediately complained at the pension's staff, but they told us the UAS Technikum Wien had known this fact from the very beginning. For the next time it would be much better if the students would be informed that they have to move to another room before their stay in the pension, because then we wouldn't have been so much surprised and upset because of that little letter which was lying one day in our room and told us to leave our room in two days.

So, that were all the negative aspects of my stay in Jihlava. The rest was simply amazing. Nice rooms, nice local guides, interesting activities like excursions to UNESCO sights and to companies (except for Bosch, it was boring, because they didn't showed us that much). Jihlava itself is a very nice city for such a program. It is a calming city, with beautiful

buildings, a great main square, a shopping centre, a zoo, a parc and many trees and plants. Also the local people were kind.

Both lectures were quite interesting and also the language course was fun (we played a lot of games) and also effective – we've learned a lot.

In my free time I enjoyed exploring the city with my colleagues and hanging around in the shopping mall (nice shops there and even a cinema!). We got meals three times a day, which tasted good, but could have been more variantly. In the evening we were going out with our guides Armina and Kristina to student clubs, bars, bowling alleys or billiard halls, where we also met local people, who mostly were able to speak English very well. So we really got in touch with the local culture.

Overall I had pretty much fun during the two weeks, mostly because of my really nice colleagues and our fantastic local guides Kristina and Armina (many thanks to you guys). You really tried to make our stay unforgettable and you succeeded – it was one of the best times I've had the last few years.

At this point I also want to mention that the group size of about 17 people is absolutely ideal, because the group was small enough to get to know each other very well, but also big enough so that there were always some active and motivated people around to do some activities.

I would appreciate it if there was another exchange program the next year to another country and furthermore a Czech language course as an optional course at the UAS Technikum Wien, because I definitely want to improve my Czech language skills even further.

At last I would like to thank the VSPJ Jihlava and the UAS Technikum Wien for offering us such a great program and I hope the cooperation between these two facilities will go on in the future and therefore will improve the relationship and cultural understanding between our two countries even more. I can really recommend to anyone who is interested in meeting people from other countries and their culture to participate in such programs. It is one of the best ways to get in touch with the local people there and to understand their way of life. To me the Czech Republic is now much more attractive and I'm even thinking about doing an internship in a company situated there.