

22.9. - 4.10. 2003
Denmark

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Vyšní Lhoty Reception Centre

22.9.

We visited the culture house in Copenhagen where educational and work activities are given for asylum seekers. We met the manager, Ms Lisa Tange, who showed us the house and informed us about services provided by the Danish Red Cross (DRC hereinafter) here.

23.9.

We visited the DRC headquarters in Copenhagen. We were introduced to Ms Karin La Cour who made us acquainted with the Danish reception system and services provided by the DRC in its asylum centres. In the afternoon we met Mr Mads Carstensen, a DRC's lawyer, who detailed and explained us the Danish Asylum Act. We travelled to Nykobing asylum centre in the afternoon.

24.9.

We visited the DRC's culture house in Nykobing, were introduced to Ms Ann Dasseville who is a manager of education in the Storstrom region. Aside from the culture house we also saw a school and were informed about operation of the both facilities.

25.9.

We visited the Sigerslev residential centre which had capacity of 320 beds. Ms Dasseville showed us the centre and explained us a job description of employees. We attended at a social interview and took part in the children's day held in the centre.

26.9.

We met a teacher team in the Nykobing centre and took part in teaching of asylum seekers' children. All the afternoon I worked in the plastic and painting class with schoolboys. Their teacher – a Pole of origin – interpreted for me. After we discussed with the centre's teachers about asylum systems in the Czech Republic and Denmark.

29.9.

We visited a small residential centre in Holeby. The centre has capacity of 120 beds. We were informed about the centre's operation and discussed with asylum seekers who worked in the Nykobing culture house.

30.9.

I attended at the teaching of adults, which was a part of compulsory education of asylum seekers and talked with them about their countries of origin and my country.

1.10.

I moved to the Sandholm reception centre. I met Ms Anne Sander who showed me the centre and explained me its operation which is very similar to that in the Vyšní Lhoty reception centre (my workplace).

2.10.

I worked at the permanent service (newcomers' registration) and assisted with payment of allowance at the centre's cash desk. Because of often communication problems with Russian speaking clients I interpreted their questions from Russian to English.

3.10.

I worked at the permanent service, accommodation service and attended at a social interview. In the afternoon I told my opinion on operation of the Sandholm reception centre to manager of the social department, Ms. Anne Sandler.

My opinions

My main impression from the stay in Danish asylum facilities was that the Danish government tried to prefer only such asylum seekers who could easily cope with the Danish society and would be beneficial for it. There mostly were asylum seekers skilled in professions sought after at the Danish labour market, e.g. surgeons, nurses, system or mechanic engineers. Those people were given very good conditions to be integrated into the society and there were special job programs available for them. There also was a significant contrast in asylum seeker's motivation. If they were in the 1st instance (the Dublin stage) or 2nd instance they got a full allowance, food money and were offered a wide range of educational and leisure-time activities unlike those who had been refused and waited for deportation and so got a lower allowance, had to take a meal in dining room or got a food box, there was no chance for them to take part in educational courses, etc.

Another my impression was there was an effort of the DCR employees to separate asylum seekers coming from the former Soviet Union's countries. These clients were not usually transferred to residential centres and with a few exceptions stayed in the Sandholm reception centre. As I talked to clients resided I was told a blackmail or thefts are rather common matter there.

If I compared the conditions under which asylum seekers live the most distinctive difference is in equipment available in residential centres to take part in sports, educational or leisure – time activities. In Denmark, asylum seekers have access to Internet, there is a plenty of play fields and courts, classrooms, fitness centres, coffee bars, etc. unlike it is in the Czech residential centres. On the other hand the Sandholm reception centre is very similar to that in Vyšní Lhoty except engineering equipment. As regards the services provided I was very surprised of their hard availability. The permanent service is only available at designated hours during the day-time and just for emergencies during the night-time, the social, accommodation and medical services only work at midday. There is no big difference between professional skills of the personnel in Denmark and the Czech Republic except language knowledge – almost each Danish employee speaks English very well unlike the Czech staff. On the other hand the Danish staff in the Sandholm reception centre doesn't speak Russian at all even though there was numerous group of

Russian speaking asylum seekers. It also seemed to me a newcomer was confused and didn't know what to do.

The DCR's employees were very industrious, dutiful and honest and preferred collective interests to individual.

Evaluation of the stay

I have to say the working stay in Denmark made true one of my personal dreams. I am very glad I could gain new experience on how my foreign colleagues work. The stay was perfectly organised and I was in permanent contact with my tutor.