



Special Edition



Editorial

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Dear Readers,

We often don't realise the many ways in which the EU helps to improve our lives. As always in the past, in 2007 too the European Union gave a contribution for improving the conditions of all citizens, consumers, workers.

Recently, EU leaders adopted the Treaty of Lisbon that will make the 27-nation Union more efficient and more democratic, giving greater powers to the European parliament and ensuring that national parliaments have a greater say in EU policy making.

Another important achievement has been the creation of new jobs with unemployment across Europe falling in 2007 thanks in part to a robust economy and the price stability brought by a strong euro. Passport-free travels under the Schengen agreement have been further extended, to include most of the countries which joined the EU in 2004. And Czech Republic will be among those beneficiaries too.

Keeping a promise it made in 2006, the EU has also forced down the cost of mobile phones whilst travelling across Europe.

Other achievements have been obtained in the fields of democracy, transports, energy, market liberalisation and safeguarding of consumer interest.

For all these reasons, we can surely say „Happy New Year European Union“!

Best wishes for Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all of you too

and all the Staff of
Zlín Region in Brussels



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Partners of the Zlín Region in Europe and their Christmas greetings

The tradition in Brussels is to exchange greetings among colleagues and representatives of the European Institutions. Each year, the Zlín Region in Brussels receives tens of cards and messages from all over the partner entities. This year, we would like to thank here the colleagues who first greeted us before the Christmas time.

Trenčín Region

DEAR FRIENDS, COLLEAGUES AND PARTNERS,
I WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION AND SUPPORT DURING THIS YEAR.
I WISH YOU A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR 2008!

CHERS AMIS, COLLÈGUES ET PARTENAIRES,
JE VOUDRAIS VOUS REMERCIER POUR VOTRE COOPÉRATION ET SUPPORT CETTE ANNÉE.
JE VOUS SOUHAITE UN JOYEUX NOËL ET UNE TRÈS BONNE ANNÉE 2008!



BEST REGARDS,
Beata Balkova
Trenčín Region Brussels Office
House of Slovak Regions

Ms. Balkova from the Trenčín Region in the Slovak House was certainly among the really first to wish us Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, suggesting also to celebrate the winter holidays with a glass of Slovak Wine! We appreciated a lot this warm card also because comes from one of the main partners of the Zlín Region in Brussels. Cooperation in between us is stable and rich. We are jointly preparing a candidature for the next edition of the Open Days and we are also working on other initiatives in the fields of transport, culture and education. Merry Christmas Ms. Balkova!

West Midlands in Europe

West Midlands is an important English friend of the Zlín Region, Together, we managed the edition 2007 of the Open Days and we are already talking about the next candidature. Other opportunities concern the cooperation in research, innovation and health care. West Midlands is one of the oldest partners of Zlín Region in Brussels. Its representatives were present at the inauguration of the Office in October 2004 and since then the collaboration has been continuously increasing with mutual benefits! Greetings WminEU!



Central Bohemia

Central Bohemia too is an „historical“ partner of the Office, also because it was created practically at the same time of the Zlín Office to the EU. Collaboration is strong, as with all the other Czech Regions in Brussels.

An important activity we are working on is the organisation of the Semester of Czech Presidency to the EU. We will work on all next year too! Merry Christmas Central Bohemia!

News from European Institutions concerning Christmas

Open Days nabízí skvělou příležitost pro regiony k setkání s evropskými partnery a institucemi Evropské unie. Proto Zlínský kraj v Bruselu vždy připravuje bohatý program schůzek pro delegaci přicházející z kraje do Bruselu.

Letos byla pozornost zaměřena na kulturní dědictví a dopravní infrastrukturu. Obě priority se během tohoto týdne setkaly s úspěchem!

Birds of a feather and other stuff

As protecting the environment is at the top of the EU's list of priorities, the European Commission's office in the UK chose recycling as the theme for its Christmas card this year. Sweet wrappers, satsuma bags, pen tops, plastic bags, bottle tops, telephone wire, newspaper, old clothes pegs, and cardboard were the perfect, recycled ingredients for bringing to life its 'bird tree' which featured on the front of the card.

These Christmas birds, full of character, were diligently made by Year 5 pupils at St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Dover under the guidance of artist, Edwina Ashton. They metamorphosed through a series of stages – first a bird outline was drawn onto a cardboard base, then serrated wings were cut, the bird's bodies were decorated with wrappers from sweets and biscuits and finally they were given eyes, beaks and pipe cleaner feet.

These birds embody the idea of individuality and homogeneity, migration and travel, exploration and adventure as well as sending out a certain Christmas spirit. They also illustrate how what would normally just be thrown away can be used for creative ends.

St Mary's Church of England Primary School is tucked beneath Dover Castle, with seagulls circling overhead. France can be seen in the distance and in the docks below, freight and passenger ships arrive and depart for the Continent.

Next Year is European Year of Intercultural Dialogue and this project was a tremendous curtain raiser as Year 5, a class of 9- and 10-yr olds, is made up of British, Estonian, French, Indian, Iraqi Kurd, Kenyan, Latvian, Polish, Russian, Slovakian and Zimbabwean pupils.

The final Christmas tree of birds was photographed by leading British photographer Hugo Glendinning.

Boží Dar – City of Jesus

Boží Dar city was proclaimed as city of Jesus. You can find here a Jesus post office, which sends letters with Jesus stamps round the whole country. Above all there was inaugurated „Jesus Way” on Saturday 8th December 2007.

The Way has two circuits. A Small one, for the youngest children has 5 600m and the bigger one has 12 900 m, so it is for physically fit tourists. Children set for the trip with their company from the Boží Dar Infocentre. The trip has 13 stations on the marked way. In each house wait for the children different mission, e.g. recognizing of animals tracks or different trees per leaves or gather. On the other stations they have to guess what belongs together or mark what's right. In each house children will be awaited by Jesus or his friends and aides from Jesus world.

On the beginning of the way in the Boží Dar Infocentre children receive a passport which allowed them to set out on the way and also a map. On each station children write down their solution they made. When they finish the circuit they will go to the Infocentre – so to the same place they begin. Jesus aids check whether their solutions were right and those they marked by the Jesus stamp. In conclusion children and their parents receive small presents. By the stations are situated small freaks like carousal, swing and so on.

This new project is connected with other activities. The agency JeS announced nationwide competition in 2006 where children outlined and elected the Jesus visage they prefer. This year the competition continued with the event "The Czech Republic is talking and singing about Jesus". The selected Jesus followed children also on the Jesus Way. The way was established by the city in conjunction with Agency JeS. The project is co financing by the European Union –the Regional Development Fund and by the Karlovy Vary Region.

The Christmas Tree Legends and the biggest Tree in Europe

People often wonder where the custom of having a tree in the home during Christmas time comes from. We will probably never know for sure. But there are several historical clues that point out where this custom came from.



The Modern Tree

So when did the Christmas tree go indoors? Legend has it that the tradition was begun by Martin Luther in Germany. He was a monk and church reformer who lived from 1483 to 1546. According to the legend, Luther was returning home one wintry night when he saw the stars twinkling in the sky through the tree branches. Luther was amazed by the sight, and when he arrived home, he was eager to tell his family about it. To help them understand, he went to the woods and cut down a small fir tree. Luther brought it indoors and decorated it with candles, which represented the stars he had seen.

The custom spread in Germany, and from there all over the world. In England, the Christmas tree first appeared when Queen Victoria married Prince Albert, who was German. In 1841, Albert set up a Christmas tree at Windsor Castle near London to remind him of his homeland. The Christmas tree custom was brought to the United States by people from England as well as by many German immigrants who came in the 1800's. Whatever its origin, the Christmas tree is a beautiful symbol for everyone who celebrates Christmas.

The Legend of the First Christmas Tree

The night of the Saviour's birth, all the living creatures, both flora and fauna, came to Bethlehem with gifts. The olive tree brought its fruit and the palm its dates. But the little fir tree had no gift and was so tired it couldn't resist when the big trees pushed it into the background and hid it from view. But then a nearby angel took pity and commanded a cluster of stars to come and rest on its delicate boughs. When the Baby Jesus beheld this lovely lighted tree, He smiled and blessed it, declaring henceforth that fir trees should always be filled with lights at Christmastime to please little children.

The Biggest European Christmas Tree in Bucharest

The National Day of Romania was celebrated, besides the traditional way, with the inauguration of the biggest Christmas tree in Europe on the evening of the 1st December.

300 workers, Romanians, Portuguese and Brazilians worked for one month and a half for realizing it. Having 7th floors, 76 meters height and 300 tones, the huge tree lights up the Unirii Square with its over 2 millions lightings. The inauguration of the Christmas tree gathered over 70.000 people in the heart of Bucharest and caused many traffic jams. But the people are proud of having the highest Christmas Tree from Europe in their city.



An Ancient Symbol

Thousands of years ago, there were people who believed that evergreen trees were magical. Even in winter, when all the other trees and greenery were brown and bare, the evergreen stayed strong and green. People saw the evergreen as a symbol of life and as a sure sign that sunshine and spring would soon return. Candles, or the electric lights we use to decorate our trees today, are also an ancient symbol. They represent the light of spring triumphing over the darkness of winter.

In ancient Rome, people decorated their homes and their temples with greenery during a special December feast. It was a happy time. No battles could be fought, the schools were closed, and people everywhere joined in the carnival-like atmosphere and gave each other presents.

Brussels



Berlin



Gallery

European Cities Xmas Cards 2007

London



Paris

Rome



Prague



Vienna

