

## Current Affairs - Head of Czech Centre in The Hague: budget cuts encourage cooperation

[ 2010-02-09 ] By Jan Richter

*The Czech Centre in the Dutch capital The Hague has been promoting all things Czech since 1994. Last year, more than 60,000 thousand people approached the centre or took part in one of their events. But the economic crisis has put the centre in a difficult situation, as the Czech Foreign Ministry is planning to cut around one third of its budget. Radio Prague spoke to the head of Czech Centre in The Hague Petra Prinsová and asked her how they are coping with the current situation.*



Petra Prinsová

“We were forced to adopt our programmes to the new financial situation which is not better than in the previous years. We have to cooperate more with local organizations, and with a lot of partners who have their own resources. But of course we have our own things as well – films, music, art exhibitions. At the moment, we have a big success with an exhibit by Veronika Richterová and her homage to plastic. In January, just last week, a new concert series started which will go on throughout the year. On this, we work together with some Dutch conservatories that also have Czech students.”

**You mentioned budget cuts. Is it more difficult to stand out among all the cultural centres of other countries? I suppose most EU countries have such centres in the Netherlands – is it more difficult to get the attention?**

“Well, it’s as difficult as ever. There are a number of cultural institutes of other countries but all of them have the same problem as we do. It’s more like that we have to look for other ways of getting our programme together. But the positive side of it is that everybody is more ready to cooperate. In a situation where you lack funds yourself, you are more ready to accept partners. So this is one of the few positive effects of the budget cuts.”

**On your website, you mention this association that is working to have one of the most famous 19th century Czech novels translated into Dutch – *Babička*, or *The Grandmother*. How is that project progressing and who are the people behind it?**



Czech Centre in The Hague

“This is rather curious, actually. It’s a group of very enthusiast people, most of them Dutch, and some of them have Czech heritage, ancestors from years and even generations ago. All of them have a connection with the Czech Republic, and somehow they got the idea that *Babička* should be translated into Dutch, but they could never find a publisher. So they started collecting money themselves, and have been doing it for years. It’s an organization that’s obviously independent from the Czech Centre but we try to help, with publicity for instance, or when there is an event with people and we have materials about their work, we distribute it and put it on our website and that kind of thing.”