

Report: International University Week 2024

The International University Week 2024 in Jihlava took place from April 22 to 26. Participants arrived individually on Sunday, April 21, at the shared accommodation. Jihlava, a charming city with well-preserved medieval architecture, is centrally located in the Czech Republic, about 80 km west of Brno.

The IUW kicked off on Monday with the first day of events and an introductory session. The hosting Polytechnic University of Jihlava introduced itself, highlighting its practice-oriented approach and strong regional ties. Particularly notable is the Health and Social Care program, which combines training in health and social work. This program emphasizes interdisciplinary collaboration and practical training to optimally prepare students for their professional futures.

Following the introduction of the host university, guests from Norway, Finland, Spain, Belgium, Austria, and Germany presented themselves. The presence of these nations underscored the international focus and exchange that are central to the International University Week.

World Café

In the afternoon, a World Café on the topic of "Mental Health" was held. The participating universities from each country presented their approaches to mental health issues and the structure of their healthcare systems on posters. Additionally, regional specialties from their home countries were offered. The World Café provided an excellent opportunity for exchange and allowed for a detailed insight into the differences and similarities of healthcare systems across Europe.

Workshops & Field Visits

Monday 22. 4. 2024	Tuesday 23. 4. 2024	Wednesday 24. 4. 2024	Thursday 25. 4. 2024	Friday 26. 4. 2024
9:00 – 9:45 Arrival at school	9:00 – 9:10 Info of the day (Room: art therapy)	8:30 – 8:40 Info of the day (Room: art therapy)	Day trip to Prague (place and time of departure TBC)	9:45 - Reflection of the week - Certificates - Farewell and departure
10:00 – 10:30 Official welcome - President of the Senate of the Czech Republic - Rector of the Polytechnic University of Jihlava	9:15 – 10:45 - Workshop No. 1 (U17) - Workshop No. 2 (U13)	8:45 – 10:15 - Workshop No. 5 (U13) - Workshop No. 6 (U17)	10:00 Praha Pankrác Remand Prison	
10:30 – 11:00 Vysočina Region presentation - JUDr. Věra Švarcová - Ing. Lenka Mikletičová			10:30 SOFA Academy	
11:00 – 11:15 – break	10:45 – 11:15 – break	10:15 – 10:45 – break		
11:15 – 12:45 Presentation of participating universities and student groups (7 minutes per group)	11:15 – 12:45 - Workshop No. 3 (U13) - Workshop No. 4 (U17)	10:45 – 12:15 - Workshop No. 7 (U13) - Workshop No. 8 (U17)		
12:45 – 13:45 Lunch	12:45 – 13:45 Lunch	12:15 – 13:15 Lunch		Lunch to go
14:00 – 16:00 Jihlava City Tour	13:45 – cca 16:30 Field visits - Jihlava Psychiatric Hospital - Integration Center Sasov (provides assistance and support to people with ASD and their families)	13:30 – 18:00 Field visit (place and time of departure TBC) - Domov ve Věži (home with special regime for people with disabilities)	14:00 – 15:30 Prague City tour	
16:00 – 16:15 Preparation in the VŠPJ Lecture Center			16:00 Departure from Prague	
16:15 – 18:00 Opening Session: World Cafe (mental health in our countries), Lecture Center				
			19:30 Farewell Party at the Rebel Bowling bar	

In the following days, morning workshops on "Social Work in Psychiatric and Mental Health Care" took place. The various workshops were partially designed and led by students from the respective countries as well as professors. There were eight

workshops in total, of which four could be attended. Additionally, two city tours, five different excursions (three of which could be attended), and a bowling closing party were offered.

Workshop: "Recovery is up to you"

The workshop "Recovery is up to you" took place on Tuesday afternoon and was conducted by two Czech lecturers who had personal experiences with recovery from mental health issues. The workshop offered a good balance between theoretical input, supported by new media, and independent activities, which took place both in the entire workshop group and in small groups.

At the beginning, a widely used method in educational work was applied: cards with pictures were laid out in the room, and each participant had to choose one. Afterwards, everyone briefly explained their chosen card and the reason for their choice. This engaged everyone from the start and allowed participants to decide how much they wanted to share about themselves.

The subsequent input covered the definition and significance of "recovery," supported by new media. One of the lecturers illustrated her personal story with a slideshow, showcasing her recovery journey, life facets, highs and lows, and daily life. She presented her various roles in life, such as mother, lecturer, athlete, sister, and her experiences with depression and anxiety disorders. She emphasized the importance of not labeling people based on their illness and illustrated that recovery is not linear and includes many ups and downs. Subsequently, peer groups of 4-5 students and lecturers were randomly assigned to discuss their own recovery experiences. In these groups, helpful and unhelpful factors were discussed, which was followed by a group discussion. The workshop concluded with a reflection and feedback session, where participants recognized that helpful and unhelpful factors are often similar across countries and that everyone has something they have recovered from or are still recovering from.

City Tour of Jihlava

During the International University Week 2024, two city tours for the international participants were planned. The first tour took us through Jihlava to get to know the city we were staying in. During the two-hour tour, led by a tourism student from the university, we visited the Gustav Mahler Park, the historic city walls, the entrance to the city's underground vaults, the town hall, and the market square. Unfortunately, the tour resembled a lecture from a tourist guidebook. Although some interesting points were mentioned, these could have been easily found through a few minutes of internet research, and our questions were only sparsely addressed. Nevertheless, it was a good opportunity to get to know the city we



were in better. Personally, I would have found a tour through the city's underground tunnels more interesting. Unfortunately, we could not visit these due to opening times and our workshop schedules.

Field Visit: "Sasov Integration Center"

During our visit to the Jihlava region, we had the opportunity to tour a psychiatry center specializing in the treatment of people with schizophrenia. Additionally, we visited the "Sasov Integration Center," a day center for people with autism.

The "Sasov Integration Center" was founded in 2004 by Dagmar and Milan Zápotocný, parents of an autistic child, due to the lack of support for people with autism and their families in the Jihlava region. It is the first of its kind in the Czech Republic and a pioneer in working with autistic people and their environment.

The center's offerings are aimed at two target groups: children and adults up to about 40 years old. The work with children focuses initially on acquiring communication skills, as many of the children are non-verbal. The next step is preparing them for school entry. Parents have the opportunity to learn how to play and interact with their children with the help of social workers.

The center is located on an old, still-used agricultural farm, providing the children's group with the opportunity to carry out joint projects in the green, such as gardening, to learn social skills. For adults, there are opportunities to gain work experience. Additionally, the center offers advice for people with autism who want to enter the workforce, helping them acquire the necessary skills. These advisory services are not only aimed at the affected individuals but also include educational offerings for the public, parents, and professionals.

Day Trip to Prague

On Thursday, we took a day trip to Prague. In the morning, we split into two groups to explore different fields of work.

The first group visited the Prague-Pankrác Remand Prison. Founded in 1889, the prison served as the Prague District Court from 1918 and housed over 800 prisoners. During World War II, the German Gestapo used the facility as a detention center. After the communist takeover, it became the Ministry of the Interior's prison, where many political prisoners were held. Today, Prague-Pankrác functions as a detention center for defendants and partly for convicts, with a capacity of 1,202 places. About 40% of the inmates work in metal processing, printing, and internal operations.

The other group learned more about the non-profit organization SOFA – Society for All. SOFA advocates for



high-quality education on mental health and the support of vulnerable children. The organization offers accessible and inclusive educational programs focusing on well-being as an essential component of life and develops early intervention programs for vulnerable children, involving all relevant professionals. SOFA promotes cooperation between various organizations, which is unique in the Czech Republic. The services offered include awareness and education in mental health and child labor, local support through counseling, courses, and seminars to promote legislation in education, social work, and health.

In the afternoon, two tour guides showed us around Prague. Our guide emphasized the importance of including the history of the city and the country, sharing facts about places that are not necessarily found in every travel guide or on Wikipedia. He informed us about various tourist traps and recommended places frequented by locals.

