



„THE RESTORATION OF NERATOV“

Realized by: Sdružení Neratov, o.s. (Neratov Association)

Term of implementation: 1992-present

Place of realization: Neratov (Bartošovice v O.h., Hradec Králové Region), Czech Republic

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SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

The aim of the project is a restoration of a full-blown life in a formerly depopulated frontier village – a restoration that would be carried out together with disabled people. After 20 years of work, there are new inhabitants, a sheltered housing and six sheltered workshops for the disabled, homes for foster families, a shop, a pub and a local canteen. Local damaged church has been restored and an interrupted pilgrimage tradition has been relaunched.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE PROJECT'S IMPLEMENTATION

Neratov is a village situated on Czech-Polish border in a former area of *Sudetenland*. In the past, Neratov was a prosperous village with its church being a pilgrimage point for thousands of Czech and Polish pilgrims. After 1945, local (German) inhabitants were expelled. The ruling regime intended that Neratov would perish – fields were afforested, many cottages fell to pieces. In 1989, only 3 inhabitants lived there and only walls preserved from what once was a church.

After the revolution of 1989, a group of people came up with the idea of restoration of Neratov and of helping people in need. Thus, in 1992 the Neratov Association was founded and reconstruction works were commenced. Soon afterwards, first foster families moved in Neratov. Neratov has also opened up for people in need – we strived to help ex-prisoners as well as ex-addicts, but finally we settled on helping the disabled. Over twenty years, we have established a sheltered housing and six sheltered workshops. The workshops also help in reviving local folk crafts.

We are gradually working on the restoration of a full-blown life in Neratov with all its aspects – we repaired several buildings, arranged homes for foster families, opened a shop, a pub and a canteen, we salvaged the damaged church and reestablished its pilgrimage tradition. Moreover, there is a newly planted orchard, a new gardening compound and a children's playground. Our activities contributed to the establishment of a regular bus service passing through Neratov including ski-buses and cyclo-buses.

To liven up the village, we organize a bunch of cultural events every year. In August, our main pilgrimage celebrations take place. Their cultural and spiritual programme is visited by approx. 3000 people from the Czech Republic, Germany and Poland. Thanks to the repaired church and its glass roof, many weddings and christenings take place in Neratov. Our association also runs a holiday cottage, frequently used by schools, maternity centres and families with (disabled) children.

Neratov currently has over 50 inhabitants. There are 25 disabled people living in the sheltered housing and 45 disabled working in the workshops (commuting from the whole region).

We also managed to re-establish the interrupted relations with our Polish neighbours and with the after 1945 expelled German inhabitants of Neratov. We are proud to say they support our activities and visit Neratov on a regular basis.

THE AIMS OF THE PROJECT

The main aim of the project is to restore Neratov and a full-blown life in the village.

This aim constitutes further sub-targets:

- support for foster families



- support for the disabled – creating of suitable jobs, engaging them in the life of the whole community, helping them achieve an independent life and naturally integrate into the "normal" society
- restoration of the damaged pilgrimage point – continuation of the pilgrimage tradition, organization of cultural, charitable and spiritual events
- development of Neratov – attracting new residents, creating of suitable environment and jobs, development of services for residents and tourists

KEY ACTIVITIES OF THE PROJECT

- running a sheltered housing and six sheltered workshops for the disabled
- running a canteen and a shop; support for a local pub
- organization of cultural and charitable events
- running a holiday cottage
- openness of Neratov to all people in need
- reviving of local folk crafts
- reconstruction and construction of buildings, maintenance of the nature and minor monuments in Neratov and in the surroundings
- establishing relations with neighbours (including the Polish ones), local residents and former German inhabitants of Neratov

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

The project has been underway since 1992. Considering the aims of the project, there is no ending planned.

The central idea of the whole project's realization is to perform all the activities in cooperation with the disabled – this means we do not want to revive Neratov *for them*, but *with them*. Such work bolsters their self-confidence and the awareness of their own abilities and usefulness. The disabled take part in the everyday processes in Neratov (sheltered workshops, cooking for the local canteen, services for tourists, lawn mowing etc.) as well as in the organization of cultural events. They play theatre, care for visitors, help during preparations, present the sheltered workshops' work etc.

It is this aspect (the involvement of the disabled) we consider the most important element of our whole project. Disabled people aren't kept separate – on the contrary, they lead a "normal" life and meet with "normal" people in a natural environment, without any stigmatizing prejudices and unnecessary pity. Thanks to the spectrum of the six sheltered workshops, they can choose their occupation according to their interest. They are also offered a safe and understanding environment by local families. Local residents support the disabled, help them with solving any problems that occur and provide them family life that many of the disabled haven't had a chance to experience before. Even the holidays and feasts are celebrated together with local families (e.g. Christmas dinner and presents). We also support contacts of the disabled with their families (in case they have one) and with other handicapped people.

The project is realized by Neratov Association – NGO established on September 11th 1992. The association is registered at the Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic (nr. of registration is VSC/1-14940/92-R). It currently has 65 employees, 45 of them being disabled. Its organizational structure consists of 26 members of the association who elect a five-member statutory body and a three-member supervisory body. Minor decisions are made by the chairman of the statutory body.

The implementation of the project is carried out by the association's employees, by Neratov's residents and by friends and supporters who help there regularly. We also employ many volunteers – they vastly contributed to the first phase of the restoration (reconstruction of the buildings and of the church). Nowadays, their main focus is on helping the disabled, maintenance of the buildings and help with the organization of various events in Neratov.



FUTURE PLANS

Further development as well as expansion of our activities is planned for the future. We wish for constant progress in Neratov.

Namely, we want to create new jobs and new sheltered workshops for the disabled. We wish to focus on local food production (beekeeping, brewing, egg production etc.).

Concerning Neratov, we plan to build (reinstate) a bridge to Poland. We also want to complete a relaxation area in our gardening compound and to construct a summer farm with traditional Czech country's animals that would be open to the public.

We would also like to extend our focus to the help for elderly people in our surroundings. Many of them are left alone in their cottages, yet moving to a retirement home would cause them a huge stress. Therefore, we want to set up a field and a residence care service for them.

In terms of the management, our goal is to increase our financial self-sufficiency and to reduce our dependence on government subsidies.

IMPACT ON THE SOCIETY

The restoration of Neratov has impact on the disabled as well as on the society as a whole. The disabled are provided an understanding environment, supported in their development and their self-confidence and the feeling of the responsibility for their own life is encouraged. In Neratov, "normal" people commonly meet with the disabled – thus, the natural integration can take place. The disabled join the "ordinary" society and the "normal" people learn to accept them with respect and without a needless pity. Thanks to the sheltered workshops, everyone can see that the disabled have a lot to offer for the rest of the society. Children growing up in Neratov naturally learn to respect differences.

Events in Neratov also help to put the region on the map – its cultural events and folks crafts' reviving gain large public and media attention. There are several TV and radio documentaries about Neratov.

Neratov Association cooperates with other NGOs and participates in negotiations with MPs and ministers about the nonprofit sector and the social enterprise in the Czech Republic. We also engage in charitable events to support other non-profit projects.

FUNDING OF THE PROJECT

Within the twenty years of its implementation, the project has been funded by donations of charitable funds, companies and individual donors, by state subsidies and by our own revenues (from products and services), we also received an EU grant.

We constantly strive for an increase in our revenues so that we would become more independent on state subsidies. In 2010, we covered 44 % of the costs of our association with our revenues, in 2011 the share rose to 52 % and we believe in a further rise.

Total costs of the project can't be calculated – the restoration of the church was partly paid by a local parish, a bunch of work has been carried out free of charge by volunteers. Total costs of Neratov Association since 1992 till 2011 were 165 352 000,- CZK, i.e. about € 6 484 400,- (the overall costs for 2012 were not counted up at the time of this application's submission). An annual budget of the association amounts to 20 million CZK (i.e. € 784 350,-).