

## **Small library with impressive enthusiasm!**

**On beautiful Bela Vista, a small square in oldtown Herceg Novi in Montenegro, you will find the local public library. Behind the door there is a library with more activity than anyone could imagine. And in the summer time, a lot of activities is moved out on to the square...**

During one week in July there is a bookfair in Herceg Novi, and at that time an open area next to the library is filled with small "salesshops", and publishers from all Balcan are represented here with their newest books of all kinds of topics.

In the afternoon and evening there are a lot of cultural programs on the square, close to the little church. These programs have a great variety, from childrens theatre to music performances and presentation of important writers, both national and international ones. And these programs hold an impressive high level of quality! In addition to these programs, there are also given some awards : for best book, best book design, and for the book that has sold most during the bookfair.

I discovered this bookfair during my holiday stay in Herceg Novi last summer. I was so fascinated by the special atmosphere on the square night after night, with people reading from books to crowds of people listening. My curiosity made me after some time to visit the library and ask the staff what was going on. There I got a warm welcome by enthusiastic librarians who informed me about the bookfair as well as the ordinary activities in the public library. The public library is in charge of arranging the bookfair, and from my experience of making arrangements in Norway, I was very curious to know how they in poor Montenegro could manage a bookfair like this.... Where did they get the resources? How did they make all these cultural personalities come to Herceg Novi?

They had different answers to my questions: The community gives them a modest amount of money, but from that a big part goes to renting exhibition equipment for the fair. There is also a part of the budget that is used to pay for the cultural arrangement, but actually: Most of the writers and other persons do their performances with no payment at all.

It seems as the bookfair has become some kind of "institution" where it is attractive to take part, an important arena for profilation. And a lot of people ( also of those who are performing) go to Herceg Novi for holiday in July (and the week after there is film festival in Herceg Novi, another event in the town...)

But it seems however that it is the enthusiasm and engagement among the small staff of the library ( 6 persons ) that represent the corner-stone of the arrangement. They seem to be working almost day and night during these hectic days in July every year, in addition to hard work with planning and preparation for months in advance. The staff show a great engagement in presenting the good literature, and they have a principle saying: "When we arrange something, we want only the best!" - And believe it or not;- they really make it!

In my opinion this is an impressive attitude in a society that struggles with so many problems. Here I found visions about the importance of books and literature which have given me who comes from rich Norway many new reflections!

( And you can read more about my impressions from the public library of Herceg Novi on our website later this autumn...)

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