

Eighth and ninth graders were given a task to write letters to their foreign friends from the project's partner schools. unfortunatelly because of the pandemic situation, students are distant learning since December 2020, therefore all letters were written at home and are only in an electronic form. Students wrote letters on the topic of the spring season, customs and traditions not only in the Czech Republic but mainly in their families. The letters were supplemented by photographs and pictures. Furthermore, students created Easter cards with greetings.

Letters along with greetings were sent to partner schools on 29th March to arrive at the designated address in time before Easter.

Pupils are already looking forward to "spring" letters from partner schools, which they will be very happy to read (hopefully in person at school)



#### Hello dear friend

my name is Agáta, I am 14 years old. I live in the Czech Republic, in a small village called Nové Lublice and I go to a primary school in Melč. I would like to tell you something about our spring.

Our spring begins with Mardi Gras, which is a traditional holiday during which meat is not allowed to be eaten. There's also a march in the streets in which adults but also children get dressed into various costumes, and they go carolling from house to house and they dance, sing and basically have fun.



The holiday that follows is Easter, quite popular and celebrated in my family, we consider this holiday as very important part of the year. In many families, a traditional lamb is being baked (a sweet cake), eggs are being painted by girls and whips are being knitted by boys.

On Easter Monday boys and men go trick-or-treating (carolling), they visit girls and women in order to whip them on their butt or legs and girls reward them with painted eggs or some sweets. Easter Monday is popular between men but quite unpolupar between women. Men get rewards for beating women and women are beaten by men and they even have to give them sweets for it!? It doesn't sound fair, does it?





May 1st, one of the holidays I personally don't celebrate much because this day is considered to be a love holiday. On the same day we also celebrate a Labour Day, a day when nobody should be working and everybody should be taking a day off. We also put a cut tree up, it is decorated with various coloured strings and ribbons, it remains build for a whole month and then we cut it down.

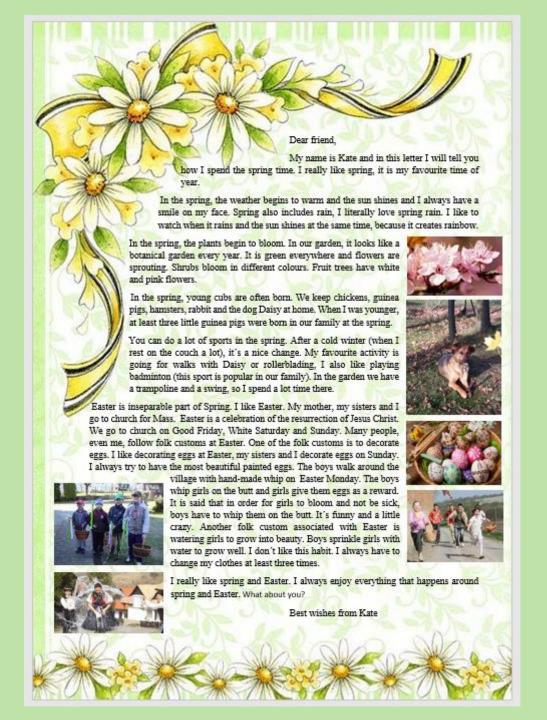
And thats the spring in my country. I usually spend this lovely time of the year outdoors with friends, we play games, I also enjoy playing football.

What's your spring like?

All the best and nice Easter wishes

Agat





#### Dear friend.

my name is Patrik and I live in the Czech village called Mikolajice and I would like tell you how I spend spring and Easter.

Spring starts on 21st March, and for many people (including me) it is the most beautiful seasons of the year. Nature begins to awake from its long winter sleep and new life starts, and the weather is unpredictable and changeable quite a lot. I personally like the colours of the nature, and when I go out and it is getting late, this is a very beautiful feeling for me. With the start of the spring, me and my football team start training outside. At home, we start to do some work in the garden like cutting the wood or mowing grass.

The Easter in the Czech Republic starts on 4th April this year and it is celebrated in a very different

way compared to other countries in the world. Easter in the Czech republic? I know it may sound little bit weird, but men and boys go carolling around the villages, they go from house to house, in bigger cities they only go carolling within their family. And now the part that sounds little bit weird © men and boys "hit, girls on a butt or legs with braided whip made of pussywillow twigs and pour water on them, Then the girls give boys painted eggs and some candies (mostly chocolate), and men can get some liquor, and mostly they go carolling between 7 am to 12 am.



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For me, Easter starts at 6 am like a normal day, I eat some very light breakfast and spend some time with family, at around 8 am me, my brother and some friends go out and we go from house to house and we start carolling (first we go to see girls in our village and then we go to the village next to ours). We get home at around 12 am, then we celebrate Easter with family. I like Easter quiet a lot but I don't know if girls can say the same. At Easter we usually have a nice

weather but 2 years ago there was so much snow nobody could believe it, so it wasn't the best time to be outside. Almost in every family, a traditional Easter lamb is being baked, its a sweet pastry sprinkled with sugar (it is called lamb because of its shape).







My name is Anna, I am fifteen, and I am from the Czech Republic. I am writing to you because I would like to tell you something about spring in the Czech Republic.

Spring is one of my favourite seasons, the one when first buds appear on trees and grass starts

to grow after winter sleep, and everything is so green and bright. Spring usually starts in the second half of March. Snow melts and temperature doesn't drop below zero anymore. Also, you can see first flowers blossoming. April weather in the Czech Republic is unpredictable and it can change from sunny to snowy in a matter of minutes. I remember going to the bus stop in the morning a few years ago and it just started to snow even though it was April, and the buses stopped running so I didn't get to school that day; it was interesting and quite funny. May



can be a beautiful, warm month, with temperatures at 15-25 °C during the day. Flowers and trees



are in bloom. The burning of witches marks April 30th. In our village, this tradition is very popular. In the evening, people meet to build a bonfire and prepare "statues" of the witch who kept the winter going for so long. The Czechs believed that the power of witches weakened as the weather warmed. Therefore, they thought, if they come up with something that looked like a witch and burned it, they'd finally get rid of the cold weather. First, they tie two large rods together and form a cross. Then they stuff old shirts, pants and socks with straw, and put a pointy hat on top of the pile. The witch is tied to a broomstick and set aside until darkness falls. In our village, a long procession is held throughout the village, all the girls are dressed as witches, and hold the aforementioned witch (Morena) and at the end of the procession

Morena is burned and the end of winter is celebrated.

Easter is one of the most peaceful and pleasant holidays. The school ends on Ugly Wednesday, on Green Thursday Evening (Green Thursday) boys and girls in the village take a wooden rattle (which is made for this purpose especially), they form a group and walk through the village and vigorously rattle, so that the noise can be heard from afar. The point of rattling is to expel Judas. The same procedure is repeated on Good Friday and again on White Saturday, when we not only pass through the village, but we stop at houses and make a noise with rattle until we get some money, some money we share between us and some we donate to the local church. Easter Sunday is a day of preparation for Easter Monday. Girls paint, dye and decorate eggs, and boys prepare whips (young pussywillow twigs). We don't paint eggs much at home because we give the boys candies instead. On Easter Monday, boys go round the houses, they whip girls lightly on their legs and sprinkle them with water. Boys recites an Easter carol while whipping. Girls reward boys with candy, egg and they tie a ribbon on their whip. By midday, boys have their bags filled with eggs and many sweets, and their whips are adomed with many colourful ribbons. I think it's, kind of unfair that girls have to stay at home, I suggest we switch roles every other year ©

Kind regards and many nice warm Easter wishes

Hi dear friend.

My name is Karolína and I am 14 years old. I'm from Czech Republic. I live in a small village Filipovice, and I go to a primary school in Melč. In this letter. I would like to tell you what's happening in the Spring in my family. And I would also like to tell you something about Czech Easter.

Spring is one of my favourite seasons because nature is changing. Plants and trees start to grow and bloom, and that's just amazing. However, spring is not just about flowers or trees, but also about animals, they also wake up from hibernation, many cubs are born. Birds are also returning from warmer regions to the Czech Republic. But the weather also starts to change, the cold, snowy weather becomes rainy and a bit windy. It is also warmer than in



winter and the sun begins to rise more often, leading to a longer day and a shorter night. The atmosphere also affects people who like sports or those who just want to lose weight. That's why a lot of people want to play sports at the beginning of spring, or start a new, healthy, lifestyle. Personally, I'm not much into sports, but I like riding a bike. But you can do more sports, for example: football, yoga, maybe gymnastics, running and more.

Easter is celebrated in the Czech Republic in the Spring. It is a holiday associated with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. At home, this holiday is very important, because I and my whole family believe in God. It is celebrated for about a week. Each day has its official name, depending on what is to be done that day or what has happened. Names of days: Grey Tuesday, Ugly Wednesday, Green Thursday, Good Friday, White Saturday, Easter Sunday, Easter Monday. There is a different tradition for each day, for example, on Thursday only green food can be eaten, or on Easter Monday, boys go around the village with a whip made of pussywillow twigs with a ribbon.

There are also many customs, traditions or symbols associated with Easter. There are quite a lot of them, some are no longer done, others are popular with all people. Typical customs include: painting Easter eggs - girls usually paint an egg with different colors, which they then give to the boys. Baking Easter lamb - it's a cake in the shape of a lamb, this is eaten on Easter Monday. A whip made of twigs with a ribbon - the boys weave a whip from the willow twigs, the girls are being whipped on Easter Monday and the girls give boys a painted egg. This happens to keep the girls



healthy and beautiful all year round. And that's why I don't like this tradition. Twigs of a willow tree - they are meant to symbolize the palm leaves that welcomed Jesus. The cross - is one of the basic symbols of the crucifixion of Jesus.

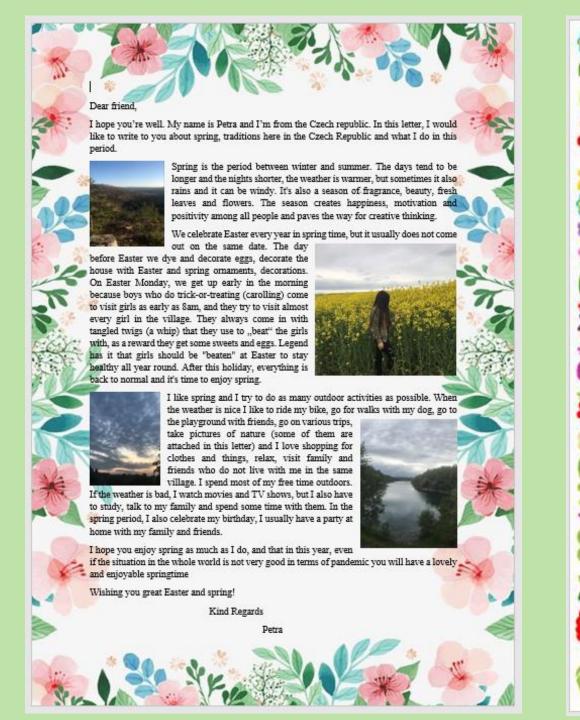


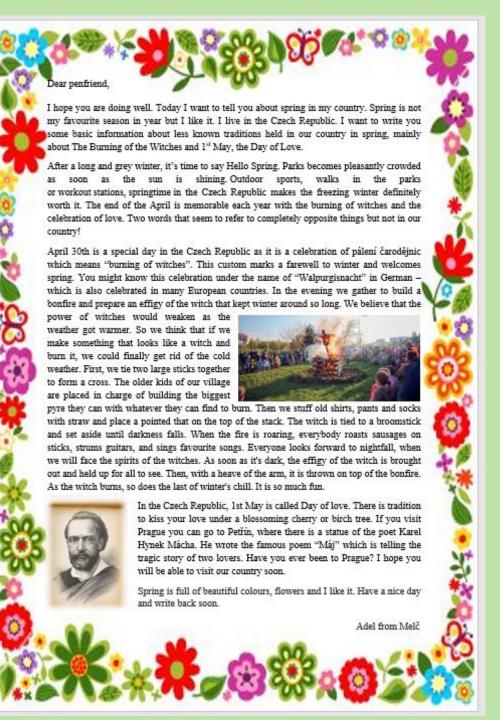
Easter is a very popular holiday in our family. Because there are more men than women in my family and they are looking forward to it all year round. That's why I hate Easter. It is a pleasant celebration, but I would probably cancel our outdated tradition with a whip. And it also doesn't seem fair to me, because boys don't just get a painted egg, but also chocolates and various sweets, and girls don't get anything. Because I live in a village, a lot of people come to our house. But last year, Easter was celebrated a little bit

differently and this was really amazing. This was because we weren't allowed to go anywhere because of a coronavirus pandemic situation. So Easter was not celebrated in connection with the boys  $\otimes$  I'd rather live in a city where traditions aren't followed so much. But as I say, Easter is not a bad holiday.

Wishing you a lovely spring time! With Kind Regards

Karolína





### Hello my foreign friend.

In this letter, I'd like to tell you a little bit about our Czech traditions in spring. After a long and grey winter, it's time to say Hello Spring. It starts on March 20th and ends on June 21st. Spring is my favourite season but the weather changes very often. The weather is predicted by many Czech proverbs. The most popular which is an important day for Czech weather-related folklore is connected with The day of Hromnice (pronounced HROM-nyi-tseh). It falls on February 2nd, is derived from sanctified "hromnice" candles that were lit on the night of February 2nd if there was a thunderstorm (thunder = hrom). "If Hromnice is bright and clear, winter is sure to linger. If there is snow or thunder, spring must be near." "Green Hromnice - white Easter. "



The Easter in the Czech Republic is a fun time even for teenagers. Many traditions are still practiced in my family. The meaning of Easter (Velikonoce - from Veliké noci or Great Nights) with its religious connotation is the welcoming of spring. Many Czech Easter symbols are related to spring and the beginning of new life. We finish school on Ugly Wednesday (Škaredá středa), which is a good idea because we need to spend some serious time on making Easter what it should be. We start preparations for Easter on Green Thursday and Great Friday, I paint, colour and decorate eggs and my brother prepares his pomlázka (pussywillow). In my family, decorating Easter eggs is a

simple affair: dip some hardboiled eggs in water filled with boiled onion peels and then place store-bought Easter stickers on the eggs. There would be no Czech Easter without the pomlázka. Young, live pussywillow twigs are thought to bring health and youth to anyone who is whipped with them. An Easter pomlázka (from pomladit or "make younger") is a



braided whip made from pussywillow twigs. Boys used to make their own pomlázkas in the past. This skill is not widespread anymore and pomlázkas can be bought in stores and street stands. Some men don't even bother and use a single twig or even a wooden spoon! Boys usually come to my house in the morning to whip me and possibly douse me with water, it's crazy. Last year I had to change my clothes three times in a day because I was completely wet. An Easter carol, usually asking for an egg or two, is being recited by the boy while whipping. Then I reward the boy with a painted egg or candy and tie a ribbon around his pomlázka. Easter remains one of the most joyful holidays on my calendar. Are you celebrating Easter, too?

During the spring people also spend a lot of time in their gardens planting seeds to get vegetables and fruit. Hove the fresh air and the way all the animals in the forest wake up and after the long winter, everything gets lively. This is a happy season, and I'm going to enjoy it. When it gets warmer, I will pull out my bike or rollerblades and I will also go out with my friends. I looking forward to start doing sports and going for long beautiful walks in the countryside. Do you do any sport? How do you spend spring and what are your traditions?) can't wait to hear from you, in a meantime, have a nice time.

Eliška Kudlová, Czech Republ

## Dear penfriend,

Hi, I'm Karolína Černínová, I'm 13 years old. I am from the Czech Republic: I live in a small village called Melč. I want to tell you something about spring in our country in the Czech Republic.

April 30th is a special day in the Czech Republic burning of witches in Czech "pálení čarodějnic". Burning witches is a folk custom associated with burning fires and believing in witches. This custom marks a farewell to winter and welcomes spring. On this Day, I get dressed as a witch and meet others from our village and gather to meet on the field, where the adults burn an effigy of the witch. After burning the witch, everyone celebrates. We believe that the power of witches would weaken as the weather got warmer. That's why we gather to build a bonfire and burn the effigy of the witch who keeps winter so long and then to finally get rid of the cold weather. While the bonfire is blazing, many young girls dressed as witches dance around, sausages are roasted over fires surrounded by many singing and laughing.





In the Czech Republic, the 1st May is a Day of love. On this day there is tradition to kiss your love under a blossoming cherry tree. I haven't tried it yet but my parents do it every year, because we have a cherry tree in our garden. According to the Czech tradition, it will ensure that the next year will be a good one.

I like spring because I can ride a bike with my friends, everything around blooms and smells beautifully and the sun shines outside.

Please, write back soon.

Karolina



Hello my penfriend,

thanks for your letter, it was interesting reading. I hope you liked my last letter, too.

This time I would like to tell you how I usually spend the spring time. The first period which is about to happen is called Lent time. Lent time lasts 40 days. We prepare for Easter. Last Lent Sunday is called "Květná" (Palm Sunday). On this day Jesus came to Jerusalem and people



threw palm twigs on the way and they welcomed him. Holy week follows. Thursday of Holy week is called "Green"



(Maundy). This day Jesus had last dinner with his apostles. Past last dinner Judas betrayed Jesus. On Maundy Thursday we eat some green food and we go to church in the evening. In the evening bells stop to ring, we say that bells fly to Rome. Instead of ringing each boy equips himself with a wooden rattle (rehtačka), which is specially made for the purpose, the boys from our village form a group and we walk through the village.

rattling our rattles vigorously, so the noise can be heard from afar. The meaning of the rattling is to chase away Judas. The

same procedure repeats on Good Friday (Velký pátek) and one more time on White Saturday (Bílá sobota) when we don't only walk through the village but stop at every house in the morning and rattle until we're given money, which we then split between ourselves. Good Friday is a day when Jesus died for us on cross. At



three o'clock we go to church, where The Passions of Jesus are read. Holy Saturday follows. It's a day when Jesus lay in the grave. After sunset Easter Ceremonies start. Holy Saturday is named after the white robe, it's the symbol of



christening. On this day the Easter candle is blessed. It's the symbol of Jesus Christ, who is light of the world. The next day is Easter Sunday, on this day we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. Me and my family go to church with the baked lamb. On Easter Monday I visit girls in their homes, I have a willow cane and a bottle of perfume or water. The girls are often hidden somewhere in the house. I whip them and pour perfume or water on their heads. Then the girls give me chocolate or ornamented or dyed Easter eggs.

In Spring nature wakes up. Everything flourishes again and animals come out of their winter hiding places. The March is said "Březen" in Czech. This name is derived from the word "bříza" (birch) because birches sprout in this time. The April is said "Duben" in Czech. The name is derived from the word "dub" (oak) because oaks sprout in this time. On the 1"April we try to trick each other. The May is said "Květen" in Czech. This name is derived from the word "květ" (blossom) because everything is in blossom.



In spring there is very beautiful nature in the Czech Republic, so we like going out. In this time I like to do many sports. Most of all I ride a bike and longboard. And how do you spend your free time in spring? I can't wait to hear from you.

Kind regards

Filip Jedlička, Czech Republic, 14 years old



### Dear penfriend,

My name is Aneta Bikárová and I come from a small village Radkov in the Czech Republic. Spring is about to come. It is my favourite of all seasons. I think it is the most beautiful time of year, full of beautiful nature, animals, love, colours and flowering plants and trees. We celebrate many festivals such us Easter, The burning of Witches, but I personally like those connected with love or fun and that's why I would like to share with you the Love Day, Mother's Day and Maypole.



For most people, the first day of May celebrates the achievements of workers and it is called Labour day. However, in our country, May  $1^{\rm st}$  is traditionally seen as a holiday for lovers and all of May as a month of love. On this day, couples in love kiss under a blooming tree. Cherry, apple or birch are most often considered suitable trees. If a girl is not kissed, it is said that she will wither and die in twelve months! This is a bit scary, don't you think?

There is also another tradition held in May and that

is Maypole. The night before May 1st, single men go to the woods to cut a tree. They remove the branch and decor the trunk with different things such as scarves, ribbons, and flowers. I also help with other girls from the village to make a wreath and decorate it with flowers. Then the maypole is erected in the village square and guard it during the night because men from the surrounding villages intend to steal it. If the maypole is not stolen, single men are allowed to go to single women's houses and give them little



presents. Having your maypole stolen or cut down means that the village can't celebrate at the end of the month when maypole is taken down. But nowadays it doesn't happen very often because the stealing or damaging maypole is illegal as it is a property and you could receive a fine. As long as I remember it happened just once in our village about 3 years ago and we were very sad about it. On the evening, we all celebrate May at the ball. This tradition is popular in my village and I enjoy it too.

I also like Mother's Day. It is a day to pay homage to mothers and motherhood. It is celebrated on the second Sunday in May in the Czech Republic. On this day, children give their mothers flowers or other gifts, mostly handmade. And when do you celebrate Mother's Day, I know that the dates are different all around the world.

I'm looking forward reading your letter soon.

With regards

Aneta Bikárová, Czech Republic







# Spring letters and Easter greetings are ready to be sent to our friends





# Letters along with Easter greetings were sent to all partner schools on 29th March



"The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein."