



National Library
of the Czech Republic

Adopt a Manuscript

Rare manuscript monuments are awaiting you

Dear Friends,

The project of the National Library of the Czech Republic – **ADOPT A MANUSCRIPT** – was launched in 2005 with the aim of preserving our cultural heritage. Manuscript monuments created in the Middle Ages and at the beginning of the Modern Period are an integral part of our cultural heritage and form the memory of the nation.

We trust, dear friends, that the idea of supporting the preservation of these singular monuments of immense value for future generations will appeal to you.

The main purpose of the adoption is to replace the original mediaeval manuscript with an **artistic copy**. On the basis of the original of a precious manuscript, academic painters – restorers are capable of preparing such a copy completely faithfully while using materials with which the old masters worked. Only such a duplicate created by an artist can be a full-fledged substitute for the original work at long-term and travelling exhibitions, in permanent expositions or during presentations abroad.

Currently, the National Library maintains more than 10,000 manuscripts and nearly 250,000 early printed books in its collections, the most precious of which cannot be exhibited without the risk of damage and are thus accessible only to a narrow circle of experts. However, the **ADOPT A MANUSCRIPT** project will make it possible for them to become accessible to the widest public.

Considering the technologies and materials necessary for preparing the artistic copies, the expenses for their production are relatively high. Become one of our partners and help us financially support the preparation of artistic copies of these precious originals.

It is also possible for several entities to pool their financial resources for the adoption of one manuscript.

The National Library offers the partners who join the **ADOPT A MANUSCRIPT** project contractual promotion under the terms specified below.

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Psalmbook from St George's Benedictine Monastery at Prague Castle

ca the middle of the 13th century

The tiny Romanesque psalter is charming evidence of the treasures of mediaeval libraries in the Czech lands (in this case of the library of the nuns of St George's Benedictine Monastery at Prague Castle)

It is not known who made the manuscript, but we suppose that it was purchased by a well-born nun (perhaps the abbess herself, maybe a Přemyslid). The illuminations, excelling in their monumentality and masterfully depicted details, present the little-known world of the manuscripts of the 13th century.

The estimated price of the artistic copy is 360,000 CZK.

Fol. 113v: Two martyrs with a kneeling nun in the initial S(alvum)



Breviary of Beneš of Valdštejn, Bishop of Camming

1410–1493

COPY IS MADE

The breviary, named after its donator, Camming Bishop Benedikt of Valdštejn, comes from the treasured monasterial library of the Augustinian Canons in Třeboň, South Bohemia.

Its unusually rich illumination, which was gradually created until 1493, is a masterpiece by four painters. It consists of 51 figural initials and tiny miniatures, in some of which we can find among others also the patron of the convent church of St Jiljí or the national patron saints St Wenceslas, St Ludmila, St Adalbert, St Prokop and St Sigismund. The depiction of Emperor Constantine with a halo, who is holding a crucifix with his mother, St Helena, is interesting, because the illuminator most likely endowed him with the likeness of King Wenceslas IV of Bohemia.

The artistic copy was made at a cost of 320,000 CZK.

Fols. 366v–367r: St Catherine, St Barbara



Fragment of the Manuscript of the Latin Translation of the Chronicle of the So-Called Dalimil

COPY IS MADE

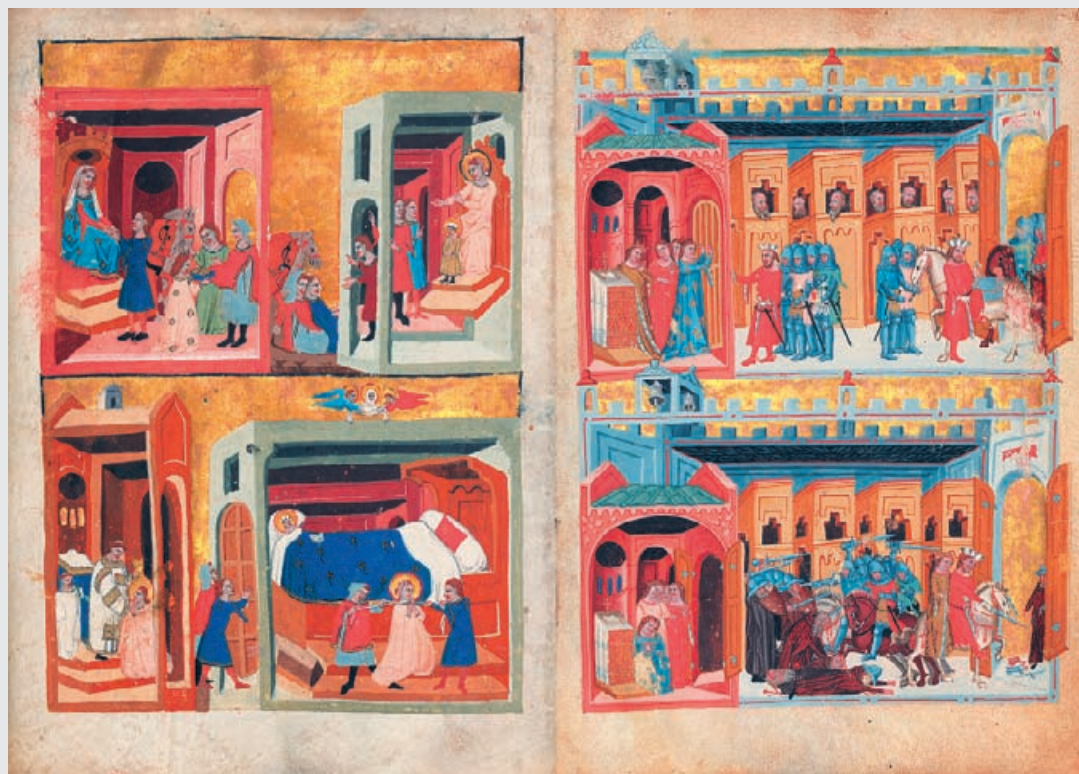
the 1330s–1340s

The importance of the manuscript, acquired by the National Library of the CR at an auction in Paris in March 2005, lies primarily in the fact that until then the existence of the Latin translation of the Chronicle of the So-Called Dalimil had not been known at all. Despite the fact that it is a mere fragment containing approximately one-tenth of the entire original text, the chronicle is most likely to have been translated into Latin in its entirety.

The codex-fragment probably originated in Northern Italy in the 1330s–1340s. The illuminations, which cover half the space of the entire preserved fragment, are artistic work of high quality. They provide pictures from the earliest Czech history from the end of the 9th century to roughly the middle of the 11th century, a period immensely important in the process of the establishment of the Czech state. It is of great importance that this is the very first version of a clear majority of the scenes. Czech history is depicted as seen through Italian eyes, as is clear from the subtropical flora, the 'exotic' Italian architecture or the fashionable elements of the clothing of the figures. It is necessary to presume that the purchaser of so sumptuously prepared a work was from the highest strata of the mediaeval society. Considering the fact that the young Charles IV stayed for a long time in Italy in the 1330s, it is possible that precisely he was the buyer of the manuscript.

The artistic copy was made at a cost of 250,000 CZK.

Fols. 2v–3r: St Ludmila confessing and preparing for her death, Tunna and Gommon breaking down the door to her chamber and strangling St Ludmila. – Břetislav arriving with his entourage at the cloister at Schweinfurt to kidnap Jitka, Břetislav kidnapping Jitka and fighting with his entourage against the cloister's conversi.



Bible of Sixt of Ottersdorf

circa 1430

The sumptuously illuminated Latin Bible after 1542 belonged to the important politician of the opposition of the Estates before the Battle of White Mountain, Humanistic translator and publisher, scribe and chancellor of the Old Town of Prague, Sixt of Ottersdorf.

Stunning and magnificent figural initials, where the figures of the Prophets modelled in gold enigmatically contrast with the deeply bluish and brown background, captivate viewers at first glance.

The estimated price of the artistic copy is 370,000 CZK.

Fol. 253v: The Prophet Haggai



Breviary of St George's Monastery at Prague Castle

the middle of the 14th century

The preserved summer part of the vellum breviary was created for the needs of the oldest and most exclusive convent in the Czech lands, Monastery of the Benedictine nuns of St George's at Prague Castle.

The breviary was used by the nuns on a daily basis. Among the traditional themes of the illumination (here for instance the three Marys at Christ's sepulchre), the illuminator has added scenes from everyday life (here for example a pig-slaughtering feast) into the medallions.

The artistic copy was made at a cost of 330,000 CZK.

Fols. 6v–7r: December medallions (Capricorn and a pig-slaughtering feast), three Marys and an angel at Jesus' empty sepulchre with the initial V(espere)



Breviary of Kunigunde of Kolowrat, the Abbess of St George's Monastery at Prague Castle

before 1386

COPY IS MADE

The breviary was created upon the order of Kunigunde of Kolowrat, the abbess of the Monastery of the Benedictine nuns of St George's at Prague Castle.

The person of the purchaser is clearly indicated by the tiny figure in a habit with the Kolowrat coat-of-arms at her feet. The illumination (the sublime scene of the Annunciation) points to the spirited and culturally developed milieu of the court of King Wenceslas IV of Bohemia.

The artistic copy was made at a cost of 350,000 CZK.

Fols. 10v–11r: The Annunciation; Christ, resurrected, climbing out of the tomb



Vyšehrad Codex (Codex Vyssegradensis)

circa 1085

COPY IS MADE

The evangelistary (Gospel lectionary) might have been procured at the instigation of Czech diplomats on the anniversary of the coronation of the first King of Bohemia, Vratislav, in 1085. The manuscript is exceptionally rich iconographically, and its graphic embellishment makes it one of the most valuable illuminated manuscripts of the second half of the 11th century in Europe.

The codex, along with other manuscripts (two of which have been preserved in Poland, one in the Library of the Metropolitan Chapter of St Vitus at Prague Castle) is likely to have been created in the Danube Basin, presumably in the circle of the scriptorium of the Benedictine monastery of St Emmeram in Regensburg.

The artistic copy was made at a cost of 400,000 CZK.

Fol. 68r: St Wenceslas sitting on the throne in the initial D(ixit)



Thomas Cantimprensis: Liber de natura rerum

the end of the 14th century

COPY IS IN PRODUCTION

The popular natural-science encyclopaedia by Thomas of Cantimpré has been preserved in 160 handwritten copies, some of which have explanatory illustrations complementing the entries.

The ornately illuminated vellum manuscript of Czech provenance contains a wide range of depictions of human monsters, real as well as fanciful quadrupeds, birds, aquatic creatures (including mermaids), flowers, trees and stones.

The estimated price of the artistic copy is 370,000 CZK.

Fols. 33v–34r: Human monsters



Chotěšov Missal

ca the middle of the 14th century

COPY IS MADE

The missal comes from the library of the convent of Premonstratensian nuns in Chotěšov near Teplá.

The canon leaf, which was pasted in the codex later, is likely to have been created around 1340 in the monastery of the Augustinian Canons in Roudnice nad Labem. It depicts the crucified Christ between the Virgin Mary, who is holding a veil with traces of Christ's blood, and John the Evangelist, with an unknown donator in a white habit kneeling at the foot of the cross with the banner inscribed with 'Dominus propicius esto michi peccatori'.

The artistic copy was made at a cost of 320,000 CZK.

Fol. 185v: Canon leaf with the Crucifixion



Lesser Town Gradual (Volume I)

1569–1572

COPY IS IN PRODUCTION

The gradual of a large size from the workshop of Jan Kantor as a rare example of one of few Utraquist books of Mass chants escaped the Catholic censorship after the Battle of White Mountain and has been preserved in its entirety.

During the reign of Josef II, the gradual was accidentally discovered, walled up in the cellar of the Lesser Town City Hall (Beseda). The depicted folio shows the beginning of the song 'On Saint Master John Hus', with the lower part showing a painted scene of Master John Hus Burning at the Stake. In the margin, the painter rendered aptly, by means of allegory, the development of the Reformation: Wycliffe striking fire, Hus lighting a candle and Martin Luther already holding a blazing torch.

The estimated price of the artistic copy is 450,000 CZK.

Fol. 363r: Master John Hus Burning at the Stake



Innocentius III: Sermones

the first half of the 13th century

The illuminated vellum manuscript of the sermons of Pope Innocent III, originally from the library of St Peter's Premonstratensian Abbey in Weissenau in Swabia and later from the Prague Lobkowitz Library, is one of the rarely preserved illuminated manuscripts from this artistic period.

Important persons participating in the creation of the manuscript are uniquely portrayed on the shown folio. The Pope on the throne (the author) is stretching out his left hand with the banner 'Scribe velociter' towards the scribe of the manuscript, the monk Nicolas, and with his right hand is handing the already completed book to the kneeling abbot – perhaps the purchaser Arnold of C teaux, with the scene being watched by St Fides on the right.

The estimated price of the artistic copy is 340,000 CZK.

Fol. 2v: Pope Innocent III as the author handing the book to Abbot Arnold



Book of Hours (Liber horarum)

the third quarter of the 15th century

The richly illuminated Latin-French book of hours is likely to come from Flanders.

Books of hours to this day have surprised readers by the richness and vividness of their illumination. On their folios, serious religious scenes set in the life at the time come to the fore and are sublimely concealed in the superabundant surrounding vegetal decoration.

The estimated price of the artistic copy is 370,000 CZK.

Fol. 208r: A scene inspired by the 'Dance of Death', three decomposing corpses dancing round their graves in a nocturnal scene



Ulrich Richenthal: Chronicle of the Council of Constance (Chronicon Concilii Constantiensis)

1470–1480

The importance of the Chronicle of the Council of Constance by Ulrich Richenthal lies principally in the series of illuminations forming the backbone of the entire manuscript.

The realistic depiction of the individual historic moments related to the circumstances of the Council of Constance will fascinate by its vividness and authenticity. The presented scene of Master John Hus Burning at the Stake can enthral by its certain simplicity and naïveté but fully reflects the tragic historical fact. The two-belt illuminations become silent informants on the society, its clothing, labour and even the food of the time.

The artistic copy was made at a cost of 350,000 CZK.

Fol. 11v: Master John Hus burning at the stake and his ashes being dispersed in the Rhine



Livre d'heures (Liber horarum)

after 1470

Books of hours are among the typical artistic monuments of the Late Middle Ages which will attract attention through the abundance and variety of the individual patterns.

The illumination of this French book of hours with 23 miniatures and 11 figural initials framed with unique borders is most likely the work of a French painter from the circle of the followers of Master Loyset Liedet. The pictorial accompaniment of the individual scenes is very rich. The base of the marginal illumination consists of flexible acanthus vines and thin stems covered with slender leaves and finished with blossoms, which have various characters (minstrels, jesters, trollops) naturally incorporated in them.

The estimated price of the artistic copy is 330,000 CZK.

Fol. 77r: A scene showing David and the naked Bathsheba



Thomas Aquinas: Expositio I, II et partim III librorum De caelo et mundo Aristotelis

the third quarter of the 15th century

The Renaissance manuscripts of King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary joined our collections in various ways.

The first leaf of one of the works of this collection has an initial S containing a figure (perhaps of St Thomas Aquinas) and a title written in golden script framed by brightly coloured vegetal illumination. The decorated frame is complemented with the period coats-of-arms of Hungary, Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and the personal coat-of-arms of Matthias Corvinus. The manuscript has preserved the beauty and diversity of the Renaissance, with which Matthias' court was very well acquainted, whereas the contemporary Prague court of Jiří (George) of Poděbrady had not then been able to absorb this style fully.

The estimated price of the artistic copy is 380,000 CZK.

Fol. 2r: The initial S with the inserted coats-of-arms



Johannes Michael Nagonius: Ad Vladislaum Ungariae ac Bohemie regem Pronostichon et Panegyrichon

the end of the 15th century

For its Renaissance illumination, the presented manuscript ranks among some of the most important codices of this art epoch in our collections.

It was most likely created upon the order of King Vladislav II of Bohemia and Hungary. His coat-of-arms, carried by two cherubs, stands out of the rich ornamental illumination of the initial O on the first folio of the manuscript.

The estimated price of the artistic copy is 350,000 CZK.

Fol. 1r: The dedication folio of Vladislav II



Book of Hours: Hours of the Virgin

the first half of the 15th century

Hours of the Virgin (daily prayers to the Virgin Mary), created for a further unspecified female purchaser from among the laity, are a prototype of the popular French books of hours transformed for the Czech milieu.

Although the illumination is not as sumptuous as in the case of their Italian or French counterparts, their beauty is retained in the refinement and charm of the depiction of the New Testament scenes, framed by vegetal motifs with acanthus blossoms and filigrees. These Hours of the Virgin may be ascribed to one of the ingenious painters of the unique Bible of Wenceslas IV, now deposited in Vienna.



The estimated price of the artistic copy is 200,000 CZK.

Fol. 7v: The three kings adoring the Baby Jesus

Memorial Album of Isaak Aschpan ab Hag

mostly 1571–1580, some sporadic entries from 1626 and 1646

COPY IS MADE

Memorial albums on their own are not highly valued artistic works, but their historical value is undisputed.

If we imagine the oftentimes piquant situations under which the individual notes were recorded, the other, merrier side of the otherwise sombre 17th century will emerge before us. Although Václav Budovec of Budov laid his head on the block at the Old Town Square, this interesting Renaissance personality full of contradictions commemorated himself here through a simple inscription and his coat-of-arms.

The estimated price of the artistic copy is 250,000 CZK.



Fol. 13r: The coat-of-arms of Václav Budovec of Budov

Astronomical Manuscript

the beginning of the 15th century

This at first glance simple and plain drawing of the constellation of the mythical Centaur acts as a reminder of a series of manuscripts on astronomy created at the court of Czech King Wenceslas IV.

The king showed great interest in both astronomy and astrology, and the period of his reign experienced an unprecedented blooming of these 'sciences'. Despite the fact that the largest collection of astronomical works of his time can now be found in the collections of the Austrian National Library, Vienna, a number of interesting monuments of this type have been preserved also in our collections.

The estimated price of the artistic copy is 270,000 CZK.

Fol. 45v: A Drawing of a Centaur (and its constellation)



Breviary of the Abbess of St George's Monastery at Prague Castle

the second half of the 14th century

COPY IS MADE

A ripple of the French and Italian artistic bloom under Charles IV, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Bohemia, reached in an altered form also the Czech milieu.

The naïveté of the depiction of the Capricorn Zodiac Sign is compensated for by the interesting minute animal scenes on the edges of the leaves in the illumination. The manuscript itself bears testimony to the artistic milieu of the Monastery of the Benedictine nuns of St George's at Prague Castle, from whose scriptorium several manuscripts have already been presented to the public.

The artistic copy was made at a cost of 320,000 CZK.

Fol. 6v–7r: Calendar (Capricorn) + depiction of Christ



Kutná Hora Gradual

the 1470s

This so-called Kutná Hora Gradual also ranks, because of the technique and quality of its depiction, among graduals of high artistic value.

The painter of this manuscript of a large size realistically presents various themes inspired by life in the mining town Kutná Hora. The first illumination depicts the stratification of the miner's 'society'. It is interesting that the whole gradual was completed in the record time of one year.

The estimated price of the artistic copy is 500,000 CZK.



Fol. 1r: A scene with miners

Lobkowitz Breviary

1494

Lobkowitz Breviary, a part of the Prague Lobkowitz Library, bears witness to a new style in painting at the end of the 15th century, surprising for both its vivacity and playfulness.

Contemporary life is reflected in every illumination, realism is present also in the scenes in the margins of the folios and portrait-like faces of the characters depicted. An illuminator of unknown identity, fully acquainted with the Italian Renaissance and Dutch illumination, created a total of 6 full-page illuminations. The iconographically unique scene, The Music of the Jews in the Synagogue, is considered to be one of the most important illuminations of this epoch for all these elements.

The estimated price of the artistic copy is 370,000 CZK.



Fol. 110v: A scene in a synagogue

Book of Coats-of-Arms of French Towns

1604–1605

The period of the Baroque artistic boom is represented in our collections by numerous miscellaneous manuscripts.

This book of coats-of-arms of various French towns forms an integral whole, created in the French milieu. The coats-of-arms are accompanied by varied landscape and vegetal illumination and at first glance evoke rather a monumental Baroque fresco.

The estimated price of the artistic copy is 420,000 CZK.

Fol. 4r: The coat-of-arms of the town of Artois



Old Town Gradual

1561–1567

Graduals, books of Mass chants for the choir, contain in their illuminations of varying artistic value, along with traditional themes, also information on the life of the period population and persons contributing to the creation of these manuscripts.

The costs for the production of this gradual were born by guilds and Old Town burghers, whose symbols, coats-of-arms as well as portraits can be found in the individual parts of the manuscript. The charming illumination of the Birth of Christ, presaging the song on the Birth of Our Lord, shows in the fancy vegetal decoration the symbol of the Old Town burgher, Utraquist Administrator Jan Mystopol.

The estimated price of the artistic copy is 500,000 CZK.

Fol. 77r: The birth of Christ + the symbol of the priest Jan Mystopol



Prague Missal

before 1467

Prague Missal, purchased by Linhart of Ceběv and his wife Kateřina for the church in Slavice near Bezdrůžice, carries an echo of the late beautiful style (*stilo bello*) with its typical fine drollery and modulation of shapes and colours.

The very impressive scene of the Crucified Christ at Golgotha reflects the dimensions of the highly expressive manuscripts of the late beautiful style. The tragic character of the scene is lightened by subtle shapes and the high expressiveness of the faces.

The estimated price of the artistic copy is 340,000 CZK.

Fol. 100v: A scene with the Crucifixion of Christ (with the Virgin Mary and St John at Golgotha)



The Old Testament (The Book of Psalms) and the New Testament

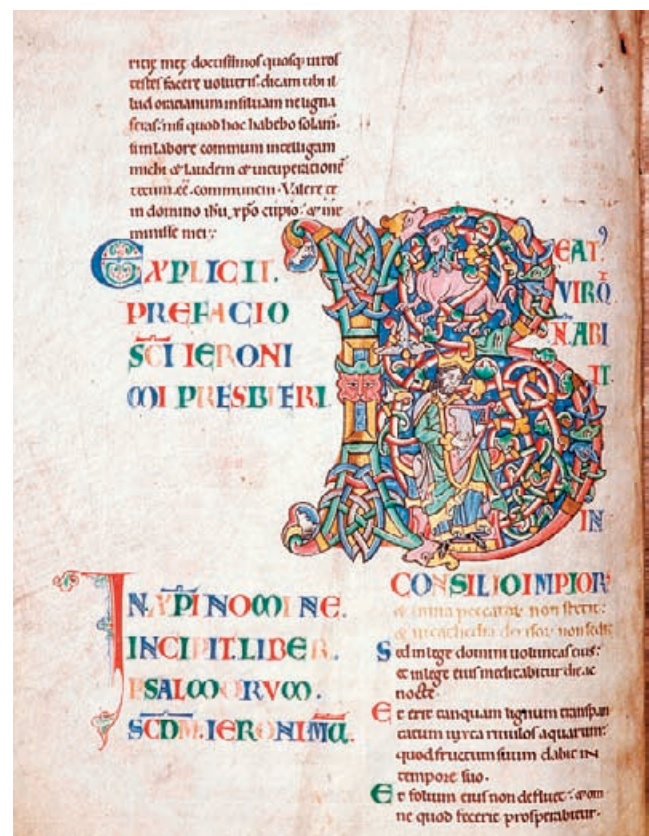
the first half of the 13th century

The group of Early Gothic manuscripts in our collections is represented also by this tiny manuscript, which is a late reflection of the West-German art of illumination.

The initial with King David evokes an echo of the fanciful art of Irish-Scottish evangeliaria. Unfortunately, the manuscript on its own does not provide any information on either its origin or its further fate.

The estimated price of the artistic copy is 300,000 CZK.

Fol. 2v: King David playing the lyre in the initial



Gradual of the Literati Brotherhood at St Havel's in the Old Town of Prague

the second half of the 16th century

Seldom does a manuscript itself provide information on for whom and for what purpose it was created.

These questions are clearly answered by the large illumination, depicting an amateur musical confraternity at St Havel's in the Old Town of Prague. The manuscript may not be the most 'beautiful' work of its time, but the simplicity of the depiction, from which we can experience the atmosphere of old Prague in the time of Rudolph II, can be considered as its 'plus'.

The estimated price of the artistic copy is 400,000 CZK.

Fol. 3r: Literati brotherhood



Acknowledgement

The thanks of the National Library of the CR are owed to these adoptive parents who by their gifts have contributed to the support of the 'Adopt a Manuscript' project:

Jihomoravská plynárenská, a.s., Brno

Jiří Král – Transfin, Prague

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Marco Praha Bj., s.r.o., Prague

Mgr. Peter Kršák, Prague

Ministry of Culture of the CR, Prague

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

Miroslava Hejzlarová, Prague

Západočeská energetika, a.s., Pilsen



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- promotional materials of the NL CR

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- written thank-you letter
- promotional materials of the NL CR

A written contract will be concluded for donated amounts of 20,000 CZK or more.

A proof of payment will be issued for the receipt of lower amounts. If a partner provides a financial amount as a gift – a donation contract will be prepared.