



21 March 2013 – Philippine Ambassador to the Czech Republic Evelyn D. Austria-Garcia reported to the Department of Foreign Affairs that cultural exchanges between the Philippines and the Czech Republic are steadily increasing with the number of Filipinos in the Czech Republic growing four times over five years to a high of some 500 overseas Filipinos in 2012.

As part of the celebration of 40 years of Philippine-Czech diplomatic relations, the Philippine Embassy in Prague started in January its first Czech language and cultural course for Filipino community members every Sunday at the Philippine Embassy's multi-purpose hall. The pilot course attracted an initial 12 participants.

Ambassador Austria-Garcia said that the Embassy will soon launch an introductory course on Filipino language and culture for Czech spouses of overseas Filipinos and their children to promote Philippine culture and to link Philippine-Czech children to their motherland.

Ambassador Garcia added that the language course is also aimed at empowering overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in the Czech Republic by enhancing their language skills.

"Skills are the OFWs' best leverage in this competitive world," the Ambassador noted.

In a related development, the Czech Embassy in Manila also introduced Czech Language and Culture Courses for secondary school students in the Clark Economic Zone in cooperation with the Order of the Knights of Rizal and Dr. Leos Streda, a Czech national who has strong attachments to the Philippines.

Dr. Streda has sponsored six top students to study in the Czech Republic to learn the language and to obtain secondary education in health and social care services at the newly established "Dr. Streda College."

Ambassador Austria-Garcia invited Dr. Streda to meet visiting Representative Thelma Z. Almario of the 2<sup>nd</sup> District of Davao Oriental and author of the law creating the Davao Oriental

State College of Science and Technology (DOSCAST), at the Philippine Embassy during her visit to Prague from March 11 to 13.

Representative Almario encouraged Dr. Streda to explore the possibility of providing Czech language training programs in partnership with the local educational institutions, which will aim to promote skills enhancement and to open avenues to Filipinos who wish to work or study in the Czech Republic. END