

Meeting in Constance, 30 June to 3 July 2011

Learner's diary or how many Fobos fit into a VW bus by Sandra Leichsenring, Sprachendienst Konstanz

Finally all partners met in Konstanz and I have to say that as a host everything is different. It was nice to see constant partners again and start right away on the "what's happened in-between". But it was also a welcome challenge to integrate new members sent by the partners. It is a chance to refocus and put the project's aims and findings in review. So the welcome dinner was well busy.

The Friday started with some cultural and itinerant input; a guided tour through Konstanz and its vivid medieval heritage. It was interesting and also very entertaining to see participants making connections to their own cultural heritage while being led through Konstanz today with its tangible medieval history. Some participants could also catch up with their history knowledge and the sequence of historical periods.

The project was welcomed in the town hall where press attendance and photo taking were staged. We were even given a solid speech by a council member. It is nice to know that the project and the Sprachendienst are appreciated by the city officials.

Martin from Wrexham college presented a video documentation mainly about the Vienna meeting of the project, introducing the project's aims and findings again in an eloquent introduction that summarized the issues quite adroitly. I even learned a new word: andragogy – the education of adults. Great word, I can't stop weaving it into conversation now.

After a joint lunch in the Sprachendienst downstairs restaurant the project put up even more steam. The Austrian ladies Maria and Susanna presented their workshop about cross-cultural exchange between police and migrants.

After a most welcome coffee break all participants were assigned a workshop held by local teachers, presenting various teaching methods and objectives. Some participants could not last the role of a student and were clearly out of it. Just goes to show; teachers are the worst pupils.

Dinner was lovely that night, the food much better than expected and a lively exchange right on the shores of the "Seerhein" mellowed all natures. All had a good times discussing the day's events and plan further ventures.

Next morning's workshop about problem-based learning by Alberto went smoothly and underlined the importance of motivation to the learning process. Simple fact that quite often falls out of focus but should not be forgotten and is also on the teacher's list of things to do. The evaluation round was a little bit different this time and even nice at that. Susanne, the coordinator, provided photos, keywords and scraps, with which we should be stimulated to photo collage our project as a whole. We could present four results that even made some sense to the others, somehow, I think.

The importance of being earnest was tested in the afternoon on the Reichenau Isle. Its unique monastic history was envisioned by the historian Gert Zang and my job was to interpret simultaneously. I had a jolly good time and actually I am waiting for the United Nations to call any minute now and head hunt me for a top job in NY headquarters.

Meanwhile I will do some research on the words "Schloss", "Heiligenschein" and "Seelenheil". Still high entertainment quality stuff, though and everybody did some serious thinking for me.

After the shuttles took everybody back safe and sound (the answer to the subheading is 12 or 13, who knows?) with a song on our lips, some met for a last drink downtown. Here I learned another useful piece of vocabulary; screenagers, for the current visual generation of facebook and web 2.0 youngsters. Let me tell you that I have already successfully deployed it. I am sure there is more to shareand the benefit will be all ours.