

## **weReurope**

### **European Lifelong Learning by Intercultural Dialogue**

Which story tells Roman's necktie about Germany? And where does Milena's sailing boat refer to? Why is Dirk's personal Italy Vesuvian lava, Christina's Spain a colourful Azulejo and Sarah's Austria a grey guest slipper? – Artefacts contain history as well as a variety of personal memories and experiences.

Bearing this in mind, the project *weReurope* (co-funded by the European Commission in the Grundtvig Programme) is the attempt of a consortium of 8 partners to find out by means of culture and art as well as intercultural pedagogy and dialogue, whether we can identify a common cultural heritage on which a shared future vision of Europe could be built. The project consortium is jointly developing, testing and evaluating a model for "Intercultural Dialogue Conferences" (ICD) as branded tool, which shall help to create pathways for adult learners to improve their knowledge about the EU and their intercultural and key competences via Adult Education Agencies, thus supporting marginalised groups when (re)entering learning processes.

In the course of the project an inspiring "Carpet of Symbols and Memories" has been created to emblemize diversity in unity: participants of the 5 ICD-Conferences are invited to contribute actively to developing the pedagogical methods and the ICD-Design. Each of them brings along an object, related to one of the neighbouring countries together with a story in her/his own language and English. By and by, symbols and stories from all 27 EU member states, plus Norway and Turkey will be collected, showing the rich potential for communication contained in objects and their meanings for individuals and groups (read more and add your own on story to our "Carpet of Symbols and Memories" <http://www.weReurope.eu>).

To date 3 of 5 ICD-Conferences have been carried out successfully (in Vienna, Rome and Stockholm), 2 more are to follow in 2010 (in Sofia and Kortrijk). The most recent ICD-Conference took place in November 2009 in Stockholm, "When past is present – about how cultural heritage and learning can enhance each other". 50 persons had enrolled from 14 EU and non-EU countries, mostly working in the fields of cultural heritage, museums and education (university e.g.).

In this conference, museum objects from Bronze age (in replica) played an important role when discussing the question of a common European heritage and "eternal values" that might have survived over the last 4000 years. In the workshops however, not only artefacts were an issue: singing is an important part of intangible heritage in Sweden. A lecture on "The joy of leading – the art of conducting" was a new and exciting experience for many participants from abroad, who until then had not even thought of being able to sing ....

A lot of discussions took place during and after the conference, how these experiences (with handed down objects and intangible values) can inspire intercultural dialogue and learning. No doubt, museums are an important resource for intercultural dialogue, the intercultural being defined as something new, the 3<sup>rd</sup> element "C" created when culture A and culture B meet.



Foto by Florian Frommeld: 1<sup>st</sup> ICD-Conference (Intercultural Dialogue-Conference), Museum für Volkskunde, Vienna on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2008