

FIRST MEETING - MURCIA from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> of NOVEMBER 2008



The first meeting of the Lifelong Learning Partnership “Mind the Gap” took place in Murcia from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> of November. It was the opportunity to make the partners know each other, especially the activities carried out by the Association Columbares (the hosting partner) and to start the activities of the project.

The partners met on Wednesday in the Adult Education Centre of the Association Columbares in Murcia (Beniaján) where they had a coffee together and played a presentation game: the ice was broken! The partners visited the Adult Centre of the Association Columbares where different courses and training activities are carried out, such as vocational training courses for young people at risk of social exclusion, occupational training for unemployed, and introduction to computing and spare time activities for young people.

The visit to the Adult Education Centre of the Columbares Association (Murcia).



The afternoon was dedicated to the project review: our partnership’s aims, our planned activities, timetable, products and the evaluation process. The partners split in three working groups in order to create the logo for the project. The groups elaborated three proposals:

- ) The drawing in the circle was the final product of this group: the idea is that people can connect each other (like puzzle pieces) if you respect the identity of every one and you use the necessary social skills;
- 2) The drawing number 2 represents a rainbow that allows people to overcome difficulties, differences and the "gap" among people; the rainbow represents the social skills you need to do it.
- 3) The drawing number 3 represents a zip able to overcome the gap among people. The zip would represent all the social skills you need in order to respect and treat rightly other people.



Then, voting by email, the participants chose the drawing number 3 as the logo of the project.

On Thursday the partners met the General Director of the Regional Ministry of Vocational Training and Education and then they visited one public centre of Vocational Training and Employment of the city of Murcia. Then the partners **presented their own national projects**. Special attention was dedicated to the projects of the Columbares Association included in the Mind the Gap Project. These projects are two vocational training courses (in Carpentry and Gardening) for young people aged 16-21 who dropped out from the school system. These courses last one year and include a teaching practice in companies and a follow up of the students in order to help them to find a job or to go on training. The other project, called "Juventud XXI", is addressed at young people aged 16 – 30 years at risk of social exclusion and includes permanent social-labour counselling, training (this year for Assistant of Kindergarten and Assistant Painter; the courses have a duration of 150 hours), follow up and companies research. In both project the social skills training is a central action that is carried out with specific activities and through the modelling and the individual attention to the students and beneficiaries.

The last day of the meeting the partners visited the Training Centre of la Huertecica, a local ngo located in the surroundings of the town of Cartagena that addressed especially at drug abusers and ex drug abusers (see the organization web site: [www.lahuertecica.com](http://www.lahuertecica.com)).

Then the partners focused on the **main common and different aspects in the way the four organizations carry out the social skills training**. We could realize that, beside the differences, we work with our students in a similar way: **we use a very personal and psychological methodology of intervention**. Social skills' training is not, or at least not the main important part of it, a direct and explicit training, but is the result of observation, modelling and personal relationship with our students. The teachers and educators are the first models and the other students are the other important source of social skills.



## **GRUNDTVIG PARTNERSHIPS**

The last part of the meeting was dedicated to the partners' tasks and to the evaluation of the meeting thinking of our next meeting in France (in March 2009) and of the results we want to achieve in the following months.