

The European Commission published its latest policy stance on adult learning on 23 October 2006, entitled Commission Communication on Adult Learning: "It is never too old to learn".

With this age-old saying in mind we, the Finnish initiator Sonya Höstman of the Kvinnliga Akademiker Association in Vaasa and members of the Dutch and Turkish associations of University Women, started a European Mentor Project, in which we intend to prove, not only that this never-too-old saying is, in modern times, still valid, but also that it can be applied to our organisations, where the exchange between younger and older national and international members can be made profitable to both.

So delegates of the Netherlands and Turkey went to Vaasa and studied the subject during four days. The brainstorming sessions were interspersed with interesting presentations on related subjects and informal get-togethers during lunch and dinner.

Lydia's personal favourite speaker during this first meeting was Gunvor Häggman, who gave us "food for thought". I would not mind reading some of her work, if any. She explained to us that our mentor project under the European Grundtvig Life Long Learning Partnership is process-oriented, meaning that it will have to come to fruition by means of frequent exchanges of data and experiences. Mentoring is about growth, finding answers. Start by listening to one another. Where in this project we the Dutch and the Finnish groups will develop our previously started process and help the Turkish group to grow. This is a beautiful example for sharing and supporting. We thought she was great. In Heleen's thoughts a comment on Tua Haldin's presentation on 'tacit knowledge' is mentioned. Also very interesting.

A personal note: Although we greatly appreciated the perfect organisation and sumptuous lunches and dinners during our stay in Vaasa we think three (3) instead of four (4) days may be sufficient for future meetings. Longer brainstorming sessions, less time for lunches, a sandwich would be sufficient.

We are also in for hard times in terms of a recession and prices are bound to rise.

I read the communication of the European Commission. They need data in order to be able to develop "*evidence-based policies*" (see 5). This is what we have to produce at the end of the project. The last sentence is not clear: "*Reliable gender disaggregated data is required*". I looked up "disaggregate" meaning to analyse, to break down, and to separate into parts. Do they want the data analysed according to gender, or the gender itself broken up into several aspects? Especially since they want us to improve on the harmonisation of concepts and definitions. I think I better ask the platform about this.

Nurgun: I think each one of us has different memories of the visit to Vaasa. For me in personal, I feel very lucky to see the first World Natural Heritage of UNESCO. Which made me connect with the past, present and the future and once more adore the nature.

Heleen: It was also very relaxing and homey to see that people are people every where and women are women every where. We are pleased to be in a small but a busy project with Finland and the Netherlands

Fernanda agrees on the whole. We will see one another on Saturday and if anything important will come up, we will send that to Jannica afterwards.

THOUGHTS about the mentoring programme in Vaasa, October 2008.
by Angeline Joordens

We had interesting days in Vaasa, the 5 Turkish ladies, the 4 Dutch ladies and the hostesses of the Finnish Federation of University Women. All coming together for the European mentoring project.

I was glad that we had ample time for the programme, to get to know each other and to match the different levels of experience. It was, I believe, Gunvor Hägmann in her explanation about the Grundtvig Programme, who said: a good team is more important than a good plan. So we have to do it together, to learn from each other and to make our knowledge accessible to our colleague-members from the UWE and to others; that is why Hägmann emphasized so much the importance of the process. I think we should not decide too soon on 3 or 4 days conferences in the future. It will depend on our programmes and working load; In my opinion some extra time for culture will be fruitful for the getting to know each other-process.

My absolute favourite subject was Tacit Knowledge, the opposite of explicit knowledge. A completely unknown field for me, and I guess for every one of us, and yet so important in communication. Good to be conscious about it, it can help the mentor in her mentoring activities and the mentee in her awareness. Can we have a hand-out of this lecture?

My only remark is about the definition of the mentee and the aim of mentoring in the guidelines. In my opinion it should not be narrowed down too much to young women and to attracting new members. For me personally, (this has also been Lydia's standpoint from the beginning) attracting new, young members for our federation is a side-effect. It should be about the difference between more experienced and less experienced university women, whether they are young or middle-aged, members or non-members, women from inside our countries of migrant-women. And about mentoring as a help in diminishing the difference in experience.

I got a very good impression of the culinary highlights of the Finnish cuisine in Vaasa. With thanks to your sponsor!. And as an architecture-lover I really enjoyed being in your Roschier-building. I tell everybody in Amsterdam about The Kvarken and the De Geer Moraine, and about the historic De Geer (a well known Amsterdam merchant) presence in your surroundings and his workers from Vallonia. When you visit Amsterdam I will show you De Geer's rich house.

Thank you so much for your warm welcome and perfect organisation of these days. I am very happy we went on with our mentoring plan. Many happy future mentees will be the result.