

Information for HERMES project partners:

Weimar Summer Course 2004

'Cultural Heritage and Regional Development in Europe'

– SUMMARY –

In the time of 14-28 August 2004, the first of five HERMES Summer Courses was held in Weimar under the title 'Cultural Heritage and Regional Development in Europe'. Out of thirteen participants in the event, altogether five were sent directly by HERMES partners (BNR, Hungarian Radio, MIK, NCRD), while the rest were mostly either introduced by partners (National Museum Boyana Church), or represented regions and countries involved in HERMES.

The overall objective of the summer course was twofold: on the one hand, it aimed at providing insights into the topic of cultural heritage and its connections with regional development and EU integration, illustrated by practical examples. On the other hand, it sought to bring together young professionals from and within the HERMES context, in order to establish a network for future collaboration.

The course pursued a combination of various methodical approaches and comprised several events. Apart from more traditional lectures (often by external guests), the reading of texts, and discussions in class, there were workshops initiated and moderated by participants, guided tours and field trips to different places in Weimar and its environs (e.g. Buchenwald, Ossmannstedt, Naumburg). Most participants also presented material from their work-place and/or from their home region.

As for the academic aspect of the course, one main result was the (possible) understanding of cultural heritage as a social construct, i.e. as the outcome of social processes in which meaning is attached to objects, events or ideas. It was shown how the concept of heritage integrates the past, the present and the future, and how it serves important cultural, political and economic purposes. Furthermore, the importance of heritage for 'imagined communities' such as nations and regions was discussed in the context of individual and collective identities.

The participants were able to contribute to the course in many different ways, thereby making visible their variety of backgrounds, work experiences and fields of interest. Many participants have remarked, either in the evaluation form or in personal conversations, that the summer course has enriched their knowledge about the chosen topics, and broadened their horizon for their professional as well as personal dealing with the subjects in question.

Future summer courses should pursue the same approach of combining several methods on a theoretical and practical level, albeit probably with a stronger focus on 'hands-on' workshops and contributions from the side of the participants. It is hoped that, in the future, more HERMES partners will send suitable representatives to Weimar, so that the idea of a network of experts will be realized to an even greater extent. The **Weimar Summer Course 2005 (13 – 27 August 2005)** will focus on the role of the **media** (radio, internet, television, but also literature, cinema etc.) in the construction, preservation and utilization of cultural heritage. It will be prepared and announced well in advance, in order to allow for the closest possible collaboration and communication between participants before, during, and after the meeting in Weimar.

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