

Press Release, LIPS Project meeting in Remagen / Germany in May 06

Exploring new ways for successful internships -
first results of a European project regarding intercultural and language preparation

Sixteen colleagues from all over Europe met for a three days project meeting in Remagen, Germany. They met in the framework of the European project LIPS (Linguistic and Intercultural Preparation of Students for the workplace). The project team is an interdisciplinary mix, i.e. students, language teachers, computer specialists, researchers and company owners from all over Europe.

The LIPS project started in October 2006 and develops the methodology and the materials for an online course called "Think of your learning as a journey". The course prepares students for an internship abroad with emphasis on intercultural issues. In collaboration with potential employers and students, the team has identified key situations and is developing an innovative internet-based learning community which will be tested during the pilot phase which will be starting in August 2006. These are situations which are relevant to practical training/internships.

The first impression student's give of themselves prepares the ground for successful collaboration, i.e. students have to "get it right the first time round" in order to avoid misunderstandings caused by a weak first impression. Most of the interns have to cope with this key situations, for example "The first face-to-face meeting with the employer", or "Finding out Rules and Conventions abroad". Nowadays in the time of a united European Union we often don't think about cultural differences, but they exist and foreign interns really have to cope with it.

During the three days project meeting the team concentrated their work on the concept for the different online modules. They developed activity plans which will be translated in a real online activity using the Open Source learning platform "Moodle". In the online course innovative media applications such as "Podcasts" will be integrated to make learning more mobile or new application areas of photo stories will be explored. The meeting was also used to extend the project network. For example a closer cooperation with the international student organisation AIESEC has been agreed.

In the middle and long term perspective the project team will demonstrate the value of international student placements for SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) and for students. This will raise the interests in small enterprises, which are not offering internships for international students yet.

How can this be done?

Students will be trained as "cultural brokers" as well. In their respective home countries, students should get in touch with companies similar to the one they are going to work for abroad and analyse the company at home in detail and be prepared to share this knowledge with the company abroad.

With this special knowledge, the value of the trainee will be raised.

Find more about the project at www.eu-lips.de.