

Let's do it creatively...for the benefit of adult learners.

GRUNDTVIG LIFELONG LEARNING PARTNERSHIP 2009



AIDAN COOPER'S REFLECTIVE APRAISAL OF

UNIVERSITATEA SPIRU HARET BUCURESTI - CTID PLOIESTI CENTRE ROMANIA
"Let's Do It Creatively ... for the benefit of Adult Learners"
LANGUAGE WORKSHOP



Arriving at Bucharest airport I was surprised to see how much smaller it was than Heathrow Airport. However it was a total shock to me that their baggage handling system was far more effective than Heathrow's. For one moment we were afraid that the mini bus driver had lost us but Jadwiga spotted our project logo peeping out of his hand and rallied us.

My pre-conceived idea of Romania was of a land that was mostly covered with thick fog. At the airport we were met by a cloud at zero altitude and I worried that this would be our scenery throughout the day, I was happily surprised that we only saw this thick fog on the day of our arrival at the airport and fortunately it was very brief.

We had left a warmer London the evening before, Krzysztof had arranged an Orange Easy Bus which was really a Green line bus to take us all, Dupe, Andrew, Jadwiga and myself, from Victoria coach station to Luton airport for our 2am flight to Bucharest airport in Romania by WizzAir. A little extra time for possible delays was included, which we were lucky enough not to encounter, we arrived at Luton on time where we met Eugene. 7 Adult UK participants made it to Ploesti, unfortunately Abdullah could not make it because the UK Home Office in Croydon had mislaid his passport and was not able to return it in time.

Extra-ordinary courtesy shown by the staff at the hotel we stayed, it was very well received and very much appreciated especially when we had to wake up early, and required an earlier breakfast than we had arranged prior to our departure. It was a 3 star hotel, a few minutes' walk from the venue at a

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local high school of the Romanian host who is also a director of Universitea Spiru Haret Bucuresti in Ploiesti. The owner gave us 5 star treatment and Nicoletta our receptionist allowed us to choose our rooms. Using Polish, Italian, French or English we managed to organise ourselves comfortably in this tiny family owned hotel. I tried to practice the few Romanian sentences and phrases I had learnt since October 2010.

We all had a few adventures and Eugene below was the luckiest.

ADULT LEARNER GETS LOVING AND LEARNING AT "Let's Do It Creatively ... for the benefit of Adult Learners" LANGUAGE WORKSHOP AT THE Universitea Spiru Haret Bucuresti - CTID Ploiesti CENTRE in Romania.



Eugene, having never learnt any Romanian!, fell in love with a Prahovian lady, he met outside Macdonald's in Ploesti, on arrival day, it seems they were meeting each other discretely throughout his free time. His lady creatively stole him away later after the final dinner and dance of Saturday for all the night to a night club, far away, past Siniai.

The lovebirds are texting and emailing every day. He is obviously very enthusiastic about Adult Education in Ploiesti.

We can proclaim that this Grundtvig creative project is not just for "living" but for "loving". Eugene plans to be back in Ploesti in a few weeks, after some exams, for obvious reasons.



On a more serious tone **Dupe Pennant** notes that "The trip to Romania was very good. Whilst I am not clear on its [the workshop] aims and objectives, what I did learn from the experience was the cultural aspect of mixing with other Europeans and learning from them on a one-to-one basis: about aspects of their culture, "rude to use left-hand to pass objects to another person in Turkey".

I also learnt that in Germany there are organisations catering to support 50+ senior women back into employment - which sound similar to some of the schemes operating here in England.

Further I got a glimpse of work ethic of other Europeans. i.e. Romania starts work at 07:00 which is 5am our time. "

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Above right picture (UK participants: Andrew, Eugene, Jadwiga, Krzysztof (UK co-ordinator), Dupe, Maria and Aidan). **Left picture** Frank (Malta) Me/Aidan, Andrew, Eire teacher from USA and Eugene.

Andrew Gardiner says, "About Romania, you ask for honest feedback on how useful the workshops were. The straight answer is not at all really. I had a very enjoyable time, but the workshops themselves weren't relevant to me as I don't teach EFL at the moment, although if I still did I would have got some ideas for classroom exercises. Also they were nearly all rushed or truncated due to time pressure.

The bits I found most interesting from an education stand point were the English literature class on Thursday evening where they read and studied "Wuthering Heights" and listened to Kate Bush's



interpretation of her love song and the debate on Friday evening by teenage Anglophobes and Anglophiles on making English Language the official language of the European Union in Gabby's secondary upper school which was organised for our entertainment, just because it was insightful to see education standards in another country.

(How much was rehearsed or nurtured we will not know. The children had a fair and organised time keeper during their debate something that would have helped our adult learner's workshop: Aidan's comment).

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The bit I enjoyed best from a travel point of view was the amazing Ruritanian castle on the left at Sinia. The other revelation was how attractive and Mediterranean parts of Romania are. That's me in the photo with Krzysztof with the camera and Jadwiga with other participants of the workshop in the reflection of the mirror.

The bit I enjoyed best of all was the dancing at Boulevard Restaurant!



{Krzysz} Please don't take the above as negative feedback, I was very happy with how you arranged the travel and enjoyed meeting the other English adult learners, and networking with the foreign delegates."

Not to be outdone by others in the UK group, zealously I (Aidan) attempted zapateado to impress our Spanish contingent, but only managed to crush the toes of any dancing partner. I was left feeling a little zany due to the voluminous quantity of wine indulged during the Friday evening meal at the Boulevard hotel.

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The objectives of the Grundtvig project, "Let's Do It Creatively ... for the benefit of Adult Learners" were known to Tudor and Renaissance scholars as far back as the 15th century says Maria Perry.

Maria Perry (centre) tells us that she will frame her certificate of attendance but could she have another with her name altered to the one she uses professionally "Maria Perry", she loved you all and especially she has the Turkish delegation in her heart. She has had kind words for Jonathan (below far right) and many more for me (Adrian) who looked after her.



This poor, 67 year old lady with M.E. syndrome, is highly active, is self motivated despite her illness, is currently very busy at the moment researching in the British Museum "Queen Charlotte" for her next book.

She will quite likely disseminate the project on a "one to one" basis through the Kensington grapevine and reach people that are beyond our sphere. If we are lucky she might write some gossip for the "Kensington Press".

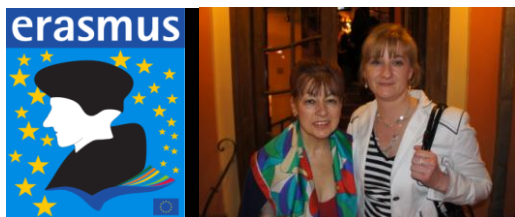
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Below sitting next to Mahmut, Maria Perry sports a shawl that she acquired in a Ploiesti shop.



In her 6th edition of **“Sisters to the King”** Maria Perry wrote about the educationist Erasmus. In England, following the reformation of the Catholic Church in England, Acts were passed that allowed everyone to learn to read and write. Before the reform, education in England was the monopoly of the clergy. You could only learn to read or write if you became a priest. On page 270 -271 she writes about the humanist tutor John Palsgrave who used material that captured the interest of King Henry VIII's son the Duke of Richmond. Maria quotes Palgrave, “many times his officers not whether I learn him or play with him”, “I do my uttermost best to cause him to love learning and be merry at it,” and “It is a great furtherance in learning to know the names of things by their pictures.” Palsgrave was an admirer of the humanist Erasmus and a friend of Sir Thomas More.



Maria Perry devotes the first, four pages of her first chapter to Desiderius Erasmus' visit to England and the court of Henry VII and Erasmus' first acquaintance with eight year old Prince Henry, the future Henry VIII, at Eltham. Erasmus sensed that the boy was a bright pupil.

Their ancient grandmother Margret Beaufort was a patron of learning and champion of the printing press. Both his sisters Margret Tudor and Mary Tudor were tutored with Henry by John Skelton in her household. Their grandmother founded the “Chairs of Divinity at Oxford and Cambridge” and numerous European scholars visited Eltham. This quote shows that a stimulating environment and stimulating training for learning was understood by a woman and a parent and grandparent before UK education curriculum was disciplined over the centuries by experts.

Margret Tudor became Queen of Scotland when she married James the IV, it is interesting to note in this book that “James IV founded Aberdeen University in 1494 and two years later Scottish Parliament passed a decree that sons of Barons and free-holders must attend school. It was Europe's first compulsory education act.”

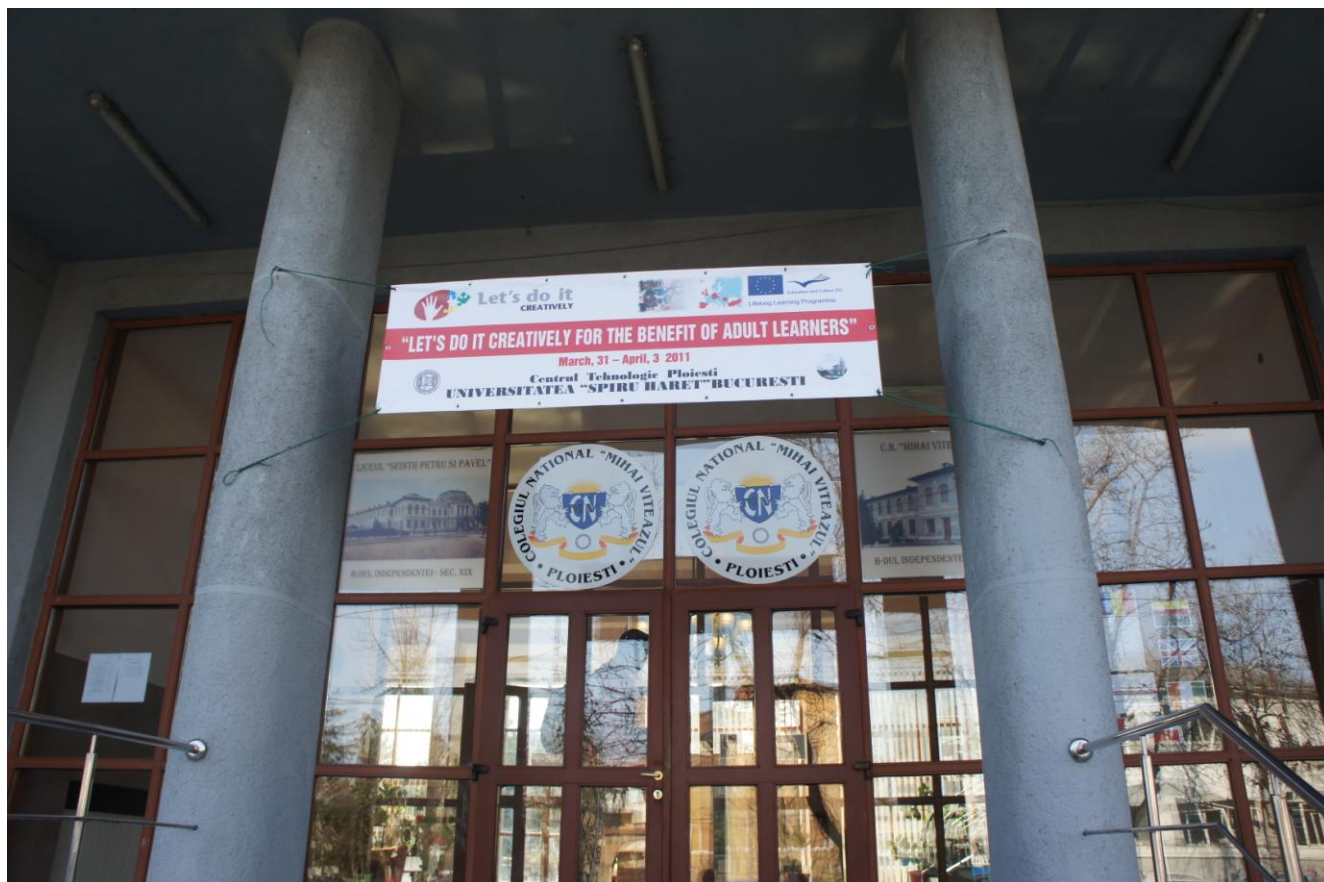
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Maria Perry made gifts of a number of copies of her book, **"Sisters to the King"**, to project partners and institutions in Ploiesti during the workshop.



What impressed me most in Ploesti were the frightfully clean pavements outside Gabby's upper secondary school, made any walking we had to do, a pleasure instead of another arduous exercise. Frequently as we were returning from a presentation at this upper secondary school above, we witnessed the washing and polishing of the pavement bollards.



Banner



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It appeared to me that what we attended was a let's show off Romania Workshop rather than a let's do it workshop for the benefit of Adult learners. The presentations were pressurised and rushed, some people seemed to be unfamiliar with the computer program used for their presentation therefore causing us delay and making them feel uncomfortable.

Right from the start of this seminar the U.K. group seemed (to me at least) all to get on quite well together. Eugene and Andrew were both very polite individuals while Dupe was a little more solitary than Maria who simply kept us all laughing until she ran out of words.

Spending time in the company of people from other countries became harder than in Olomouc, it was hard to raise cultural and language awareness, especially at mealtimes when we had to sit at tables which were mainly occupied by members from the UK. We were not allowed to mix and sit with other friends at other meal times. This was a request made by Gabby Tata before our second meal. Hence there was a failure to integrate the groups as Lukas had managed to do in Olomouc. I expect because of the greater number of people in the U.K group. Eventually we rebelled, separated and joined others. On Saturday evening Maria felt exhausted after her meal; I escorted her back to the hotel. I excluded myself from the after dinner dance on Saturday. So did Jadwiga.

When Krzysztof told us that he had to fly a few hours earlier than us to Oslo for a Transversal study visit, the loss of his personal energy affected some of us in the UK group. However Jadwiga and Andrew rallied us and looked to our well-being and hospitality, as we were unaware that Krzysztof had given them both detailed instructions and so our return journey passed pleasantly and without any difficulty.

Justice has proved harsh upon Romanian people throughout its history, once a part of the Byzantium Empire. It is a rich land desired by all who passed through it, Visigoths, Vandals, Ottoman-Turks, Hitler and his Nazi Reich from the west and Soviets from the North-east. The Romanians have struggled and succeeded in keeping the land and to maintain individual identity and not submit when confronted with a mightier foe. Ploiesti survived during the 2nd WW, the destruction of nearly a 1/3 of its oil refining potential by USAAF bombing. They survived a wicked and cruel communist tyrant/dictator.

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As part of our Cultural awareness of Romania in this workshop I cautiously, accompanied by Andrew, Eugene, Dupe, Maria, Jadwiga and Krzysztof and participants from Spain, Eire, Portugal, Malta, Turkey, Czech and Germany approached the imposing historical building of Peles Castle of the Romanian Royal family.

It was delightfully warm and sunny throughout the day, and into the early evening made all of us feel contented. It has certainly left a strong desire within me to return to Romania as a Tourist.



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Below Dupe, UK Jonathan, Malta and Jadwiga, UK.



With its dark ornately carved wooden exteriors, and its gently sloping roofs. This was the stereotypical Transylvanian castle from many tales told throughout history, alluring and fascinating with its appearance standing with such majesty as it peered at us from in between the tree tops.

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The structure must have not only impressed its owners but should have given a sense of anxiety to any guest seeing it for the first time, hereby only enhancing Romania's reputation as a land of stunning beauty which is filled with splendour for the traveller in a welcoming hospitality.



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Grandeur and taste was projected into the creation of Peles-Castle.



It shall remain within my mind as a truly beautiful building with much art work and exclusive craftsmanship, its hidden walls within its walls, as-well a clearly displayed exterior.



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Here the Romanian Queens of German birth promoted new Romanian Literature and Art and created with their husbands and their subjects new Romanian History.



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Kindness and sincerity was an emotion I found was expressed clearly by every project participant; I had the pleasure of speaking to during our stay.

Below Two Turkish Princesses.



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Perfectly organised with pin - point accuracy describes how Gabriel Tata, our host, was able to arrange events and presentations. He was also instantly able to change plans when confronted by unexpected delays due to a variety of reasons.

Expressing his authority, only, by remaining at the front of the group during any walking excursion, often waving his hand in the air, while calling for us to remain together and not to become separate. Many times the inevitable happened, the tail separated from its head and was lost requiring frantic conversations on cellphones and loss of time.



Using only one word (Hurry !) he was able to gather us all and point us in the right direction, to prevent any delays. This made this workshop seem somewhat rushed.

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Don't feed Romanian Bears!



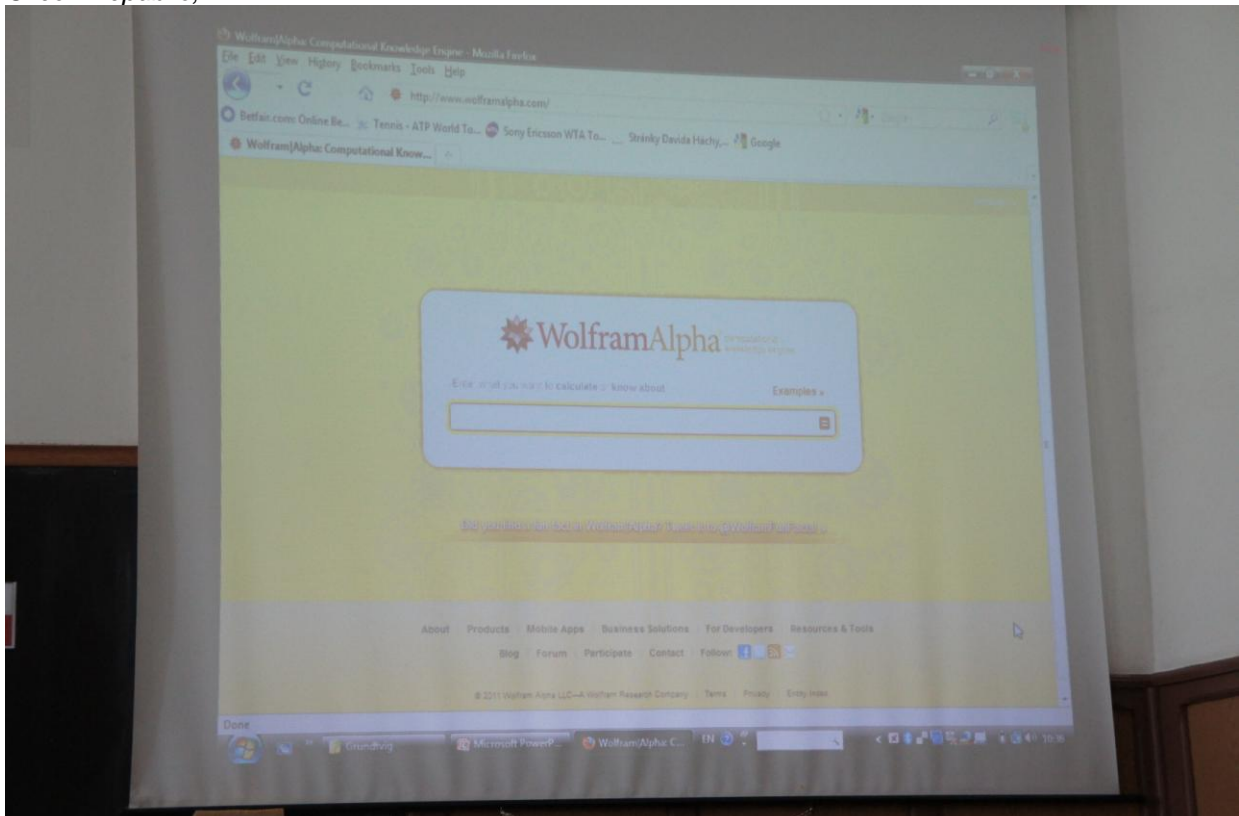
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Many of the presentations we had to endure have remained with me, and I have reacted positively to many of them already.



Apps from Wolfram-Alpha are proving useful, presented by Jan, Veronika, Daniela And Lukas of the Czech Republic,

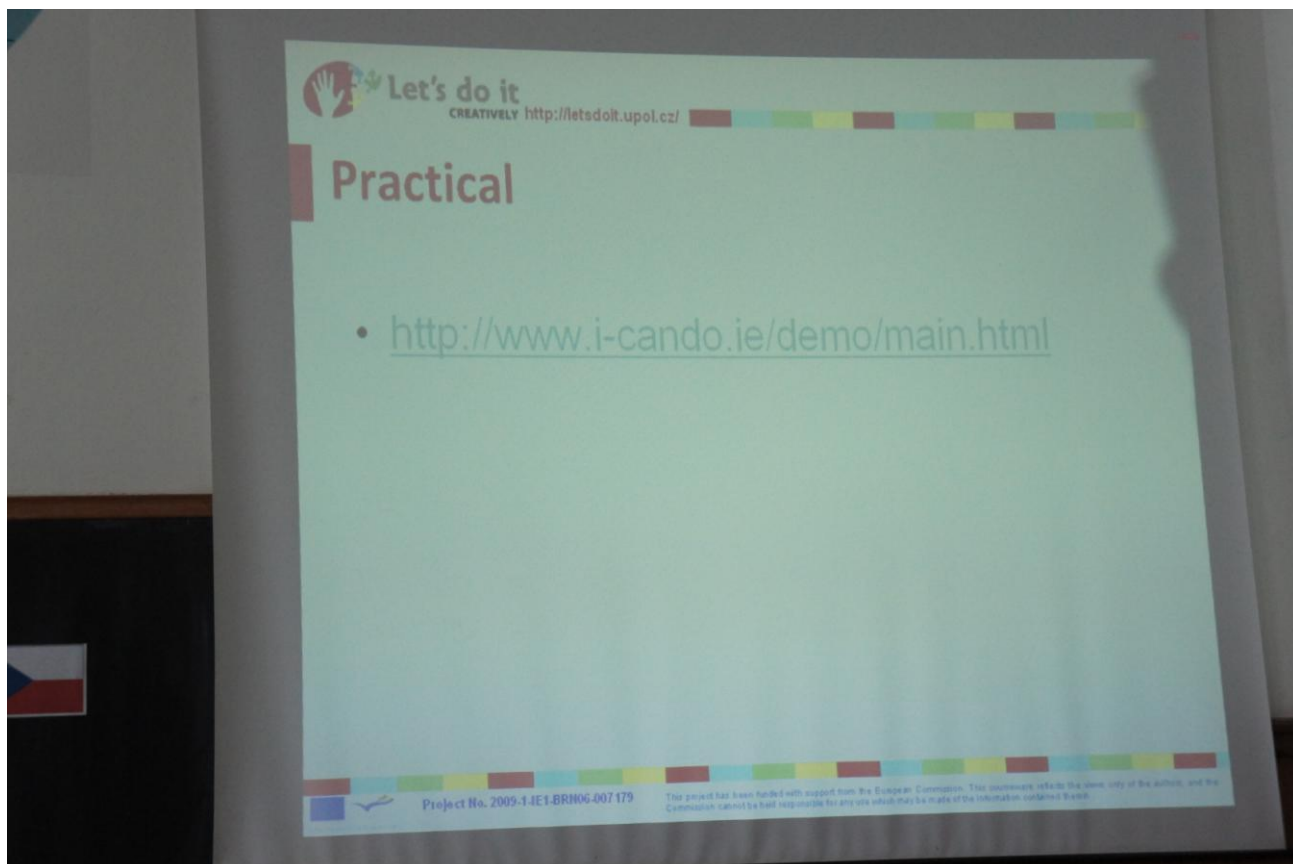


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while I prepare to read Don Quixote by Cervantes, which should keep me occupied for several months to come. Also one of the Romanian presentations had evoked in me a desire make a return to amateur dramatics, an interest I thoroughly enjoyed throughout my youth, I wonder if I could achieve success at it.



Neither the presentations nor the activities arranged for us prior to our arrival have left me feeling tired.

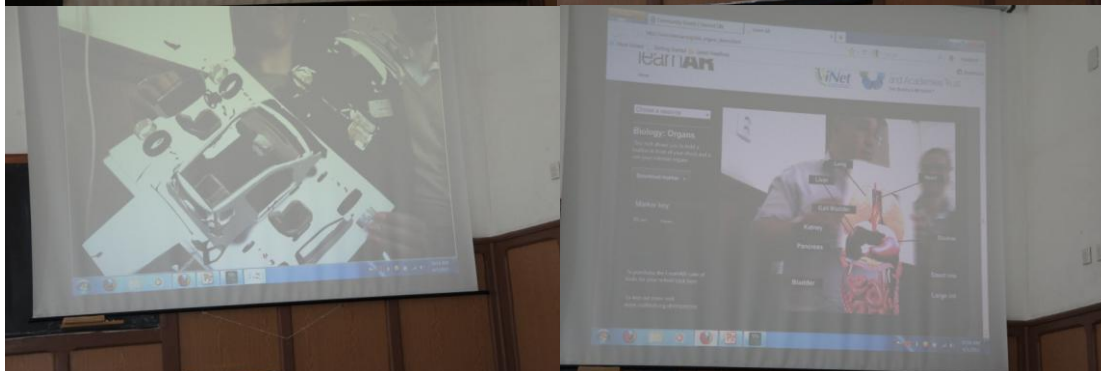
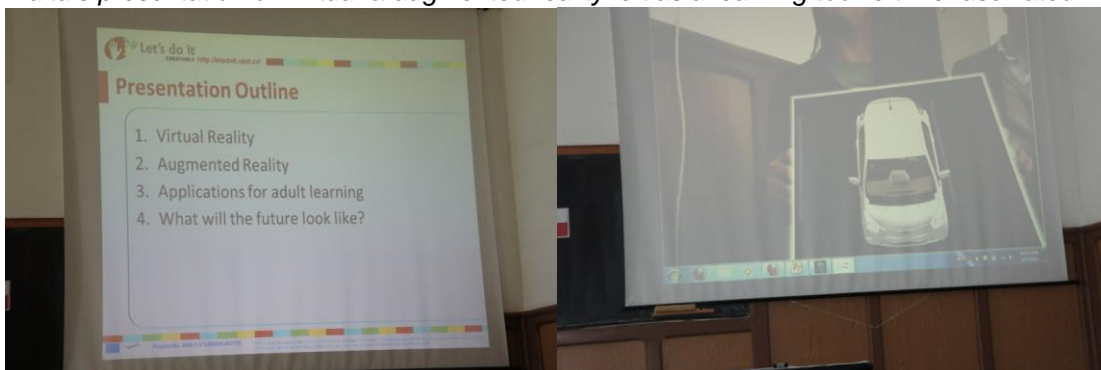
Overall this workshop has left me feeling that want and need to achieve better results from both academic and educational aspects to my life. Especially the aspect of academia studies in which I have clearly displayed poor results at in the past.

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Malta's presentation on virtual & augmented reality left as a learning tool left me fascinated.



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Questions I had after many of the presentations had finished, became irrelevant after I realised that the reason I had not understood completely was because many of the guests had to translate to their companions while the presentation was being made. All of whom appeared to be sat directly behind me, making it hard to hear what was being said during the presentation. Also the rooms we were in were very hot and stuffy; this made it hard for me to remain awake all of the time.

Krzysztof's presentation "Enigma" about his use of spelling games & military codes for basic learning & learning to learn was interesting and inspiring it involved us participants but before participants could develop code games in their own languages the time was cut short.



Teaching methods varied a great deal and the ideas presented during this seminar entertained some intuitive and rational varieties which I hope can or are already expressed in the classroom or teaching environment.

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Usufruct mannerisms were displayed by a few of the guests attending this seminar but not obviously to the un-attentive eye. Which I found to be disappointing because we were there in my opinion to listen and to learn, both from the presentations and also from cultural integration

Voluntarily I offered my assistance to Krzysztof, as I am a disabled adult who had required re-education to achieve maximum potential. A decision which I do not regret. I feel a great benefit from having met him and having become involved with these Grundtvig projects and workshops/seminars, and other programs he thinks I can benefit by being involved in them.

Kindness and sincerity was an emotion I found was expressed clearly by every project participant; I had the pleasure of speaking with many during our stay and renew my acquaintance with friends I had made in Olomouc especially with those from Caceres and Olomouc.

This 74 year old, this Spanish lady participant of our workshop had never flown on a plane before and was a better dancer than any of us in the workshop.



Longingness to return to Romania under my own steam has left me with regrets. I anticipate 2012 when I can arrange a booking to stay in this enormously clean and pleasant land among its cheerful and friendly citizens.

*Healing and rejuvenation is found in me during this trip. Prior to this workshop in Ploesti and last year in Olomouc CZ and other Grundtvig project activities in UK for **“Let's Do It Creatively ... for the benefit of Adult Learners”** I had become almost reclusive and very much withdrawn. Thanks to my new friends my life has improved.*

Written by Aidan Michael Cooper in Uxbridge, London April 10th 2011 an Adult Learner of Joanna Pinewood Education Limited.